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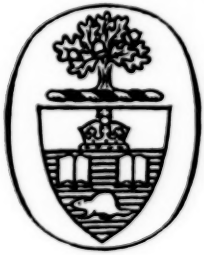

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THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME

NORTHROP FRYE

THE subject-matter of literary criticism is an art, and criticism is presumably an art too. This sounds as though criticism were a parasitic form of literary expression, an art based on pre-existing art, a second-hand imitation of creative power. The conception of the critic as a creator *manqué* is very popular, especially among artists. Yet the critic has specific jobs to do which the experience of literature has proved to be less ignoble. One obvious function of criticism is to mediate between the artist and his public. Art that tries to do without criticism is apt to get involved in either of two fallacies. One is the attempt to reach the public directly through "popular" art, the assumption being that criticism is artificial and public taste natural. Below this is a further assumption about natural taste which goes back to Rousseau. The opposite fallacy is the conception of art as a mystery, an initiation into an esoteric community. Here criticism is restricted to masonic signs of occult understanding, to significant exclamations and gestures and oblique cryptic comments. This fallacy is like the other one in assuming a rough correlation between the merit of art and the degree of public response to it, though the correlation it assumes is inverse. But art of this kind is cut off from society as a whole, not so much because it retreats from life—the usual charge against it—as because it rejects criticism.

On the other hand, a public that attempts to do without criticism, and asserts that it knows what it likes, brutalizes the arts. Rejection of criticism from the point of view of the public, or its guardians, is involved in all forms of censorship. Art is a continuously emancipating factor in society, and the critic, whose job it is to get as many people in contact with the best that has been and is being thought and said, is, at least ideally, the pioneer of education and the shaper of cultural tradition. There is no immediate correlation either way between the merits of art and its general reception. Shakespeare was more popular than Webster, but not because he was a greater dramatist; W. H. Auden is less popular than Edgar Guest, but not because he is a better poet. But after the critic has been at work for a while, some positive correlation may begin to take shape. Most of Shakespeare's current popularity is due to critical publicity.

Why does criticism have to exist? The best and shortest answer is that it can talk, and all the arts are dumb. In painting, sculpture, or music it is easy enough to see that the art shows forth, and cannot

say anything. And, though it sounds like a frantic paradox to say that the poet is inarticulate or speechless, literary works also are, for the critic, mute complexes of facts, like the data of science. Poetry is a *disinterested* use of words: it does not address a reader directly. When it does so, we feel that the poet has a certain distrust in the capacity of readers and critics to interpret his meaning without assistance, and has therefore stopped creating a poem and begun to talk. It is not merely tradition that impels a poet to invoke a Muse and protest that his utterance is involuntary. Nor is it mere paradox that causes Mr. MacLeish, in his famous "Ars Poetica," to apply the words "mute," "dumb," and "wordless" to a poem. The poet, as Mill saw in a wonderful flash of critical insight, is not heard, but overheard. The first assumption of criticism, and the assumption on which the autonomy of criticism rests, is not that the poet does not know what he is talking about, but that he cannot talk about what he knows, any more than the painter or composer can.

The poet may of course have some critical ability of his own, and so interpret his own work; but the Dante who writes a commentary on the first canto of the *Paradiso* is merely one more of Dante's critics. What he says has a peculiar interest, but not a peculiar authority. Poets are too often the most unreliable judges of the value or even the meaning of what they have written. When Ibsen maintains that *Emperor and Galilean* is his greatest play and that certain episodes in *Peer Gynt* are not allegorical, one can only say that Ibsen is an indifferent critic of Ibsen. Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is a remarkable document, but as a piece of Wordsworthian criticism nobody would give it more than about a B plus. Critics of Shakespeare are often supposed to be ridiculed by the assertion that if Shakespeare were to come back from the dead he would not be able to understand their criticism and would accuse them of reading far more meaning into his work than he intended. This, though pure hypothesis, is likely enough: we have very little evidence of Shakespeare's interest in criticism, either of himself or of anyone else. But all that this means is that Shakespeare, though a great dramatist, was not also the greatest of Shakespearean critics. Why should he be?

The notion that the poet is necessarily his own best interpreter is indissolubly linked with the conception of the critic as a parasite or jackal of literature. Once we admit that he has a specific field of activity, and that he has autonomy within that field, we are forced to concede that criticism deals with literature in terms of a specific con-

ceptual framework. This framework is not that of literature itself, for this is the parasite theory again, but neither is it something outside literature, for in that case the autonomy of criticism would again literature, for in that case the autonomy of criticism would again disappear, and the whole subject would be assimilated to something else.

Here, however, we have arrived at another conception of criticism which is different from the one we started with. This autonomous organizing of literature may be criticism, but it is not the activity of mediating between the artist and his public which we at first ascribed to criticism. There is one kind of critic, evidently, who faces the public and another who is still as completely involved in literary values as the poet himself. We may call this latter type the critic proper, and the former the critical reader. It may sound like quibbling to imply such a distinction, but actually the whole question of whether the critic has a real function, independent both of the artist at his most explicit and of the public at its most discriminating, is involved in it.

Our present-day critical traditions are rooted in the age of Hazlitt and Arnold and Sainte-Beuve, who were, in terms of our distinction, critical readers. They represented, not another conceptual framework within literature, but the reading public at its most expert and judicious. They conceived it to be the task of a critic to exemplify how a man of taste uses and evaluates literature, and thus how literature is to be absorbed into society. The nineteenth century has bequeathed to us the conception of the *causerie,* the man of taste's reflections on works of literature, as the normal form of critical expression. I give one example of the difference between a critic and a critical reader which amounts to a head-on collision. In one of his curious, brilliant, scatter-brained footnotes to *Munera Pulveris,* John Ruskin says:

> Of Shakspeare's names I will afterwards speak at more length; they are curiously—often barbarously—mixed out of various traditions and languages. Three of the clearest in meaning have been already noticed. Desdemona—"δυσδαιμονία," *miserable fortune*—is also plain enough. Othello is, I believe, "the careful"; all the calamity of the tragedy arising from the single flaw and error in his magnificently collected strength. Ophelia, "serviceableness," the true, lost wife of Hamlet, is marked as having a Greek name by that of her brother, Laertes; and its signification is once exquisitely alluded to in that brother's last word of her, where her gentle preciousness is opposed to the uselessness of the churlish clergy:—"A *ministering* angel shall my sister be, when thou liest howling."

On this passage Matthew Arnold comments as follows:

Now, really, what a piece of extravagance all that is! I will not say that the meaning of Shakspeare's names (I put aside the question as to the correctness of Mr. Ruskin's etymologies) has no effect at all, may be entirely lost sight of; but to give it that degree of prominence is to throw the reins to one's whim, to forget all moderation and proportion, to lose the balance of one's mind altogether. It is to show in one's criticism, to the highest excess, the note of provinciality.

Ruskin is a critic, perhaps the only important one that the Victorian age produced, and, whether he is right or wrong, what he is attempting is genuine criticism. He is trying to interpret Shakespeare in terms of a conceptual framework which belongs to the critic alone, and yet relates itself to the plays alone. Arnold is perfectly right in feeling that this is not the sort of material that the public critic can directly use. But he does not suspect the existence of criticism as we have defined it above. Here it is Arnold who is the provincial. Ruskin has learned his trade from the great iconological tradition which comes down through classical and biblical scholarship into Dante and Spenser, both of whom he knew how to read, and which is incorporated in the medieval cathedrals he had pored over in such detail. Arnold is assuming, as a universal law of nature, certain "plain sense" critical assumptions which were hardly heard of before Dryden's time and which can assuredly not survive the age of Freud and Jung and Frazer and Cassirer. What emerges from this is that the critic and critical reader are each better off when they know of one another's existence, and perhaps best off when their work forms different aspects of the same thing.

However, the *causerie* does not, or at least need not, involve any fallacy in the theory of criticism itself. The same cannot be said of the reaction against the *causerie* which has produced the leading twentieth-century substitute for criticism. This is the integrated system of religious, philosophical, and political ideas which takes in, as a matter of course, a critical attitude to literature. Thus Mr. Eliot defines his outlook as classical in literature, royalist in politics, anglo-catholic in religion; and it is clear that the third of these has been the spark-plug, the motivating power that drives the other two. Mr. Allen Tate describes his own critical attitude as "reactionary" in a sense intended to include political and philosophical overtones, and the same is true of Hulme's *Speculations,* which are primarily political speculations. Mr. Yvor Winters collects his criticism under the title "In Defence of Reason." What earthly business, one may inquire, has a literary critic to defend reason? He might as well be defending virtue. And so we could go through the list of Marxist, Thomist,

Kierkegaardian, Freudian, Jungian, Spenglerian, or existential critics, all determined to substitute a critical attitude for criticism, all proposing, not to find a conceptual framework for criticism within literature, but to attach criticism to one of a miscellany of frameworks outside it.

The axioms and postulates of criticism have to grow out of the art that the critic is dealing with. The first thing that the literary critic has to do is to read literature, to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field. Critical principles cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics, science, or any combination of these. Further, an inductive survey of his own field is equally essential for the critic of painting or of music, and so each art has its own criticism. Aesthetics, or the consideration of art as a whole, is not a form of criticism but a branch of philosophy. I state all this as dogma, but I think the experience of literature bears me out. To subordinate criticism to a critical attitude is to stereotype certain values in literature which can be related to the extra-literary source of the value-judgment. Mr. Eliot does not mean to say that Dante is a greater poet than Shakespeare or perhaps even Milton; yet he imposes on literature an extra-literary schematism, a sort of religio-political colour-filter, which makes Dante leap into prominence, shows Milton up as dark and faulty, and largely obliterates the outlines of Shakespeare. All that the genuine critic can do with this colour-filter is to murmur politely that it shows things in a new light and is indeed a most stimulating contribution to criticism.

If it is insisted that we cannot criticize literature until we have acquired a coherent philosophy of criticism with its centre of gravity in something else, the existence of criticism as a separate subject is still being denied. But there is one possibility further. If criticism exists, it must be, we have said, an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field. The word "inductive" suggests some sort of scientific procedure. What if criticism is a science as well as an art? The writing of history is an art, but no one doubts that scientific principles are involved in the historian's treatment of evidence, and that the presence of this scientific element is what distinguishes history from legend. Is it also a scientific element in criticism which distinguishes it from *causerie* on the one hand, and the superimposed critical attitude on the other? For just as the presence of science changes the character of a subject from the casual to the causal, from the random

and intuitive to the systematic, so it also safeguards the integrity of a subject from external invasions. So we may find in science a means of strengthening the fences of criticism against enclosure movements coming not only from religion and philosophy, but from the other sciences as well.

If criticism is a science, it is clearly a social science, which means that it should waste no time in trying to assimilate its methods to those of the natural sciences. Like psychology, it is directly concerned with the human mind, and will only confuse itself with statistical methodologies. I understand that there is a Ph.D. thesis somewhere that displays a list of Hardy's novels in the order of the percentages of gloom that they contain, but one does not feel that that sort of procedure should be encouraged. Yet as the field is narrowed to the social sciences the distinctions must be kept equally sharp. Thus there can be no such thing as a sociological "approach" to literature. There is no reason why a sociologist should not work exclusively on literary material, but if he does he should pay no attention to literary values. In his field Horatio Alger and the writer of the Elsie books are more important than Hawthorne or Melville, and a single issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* is worth all of Henry James. The literary critic using sociological data is similarly under no obligation to respect sociological values.

It seems absurd to say that there *may* be a scientific element in criticism when there are dozens of learned journals based on the assumption that there is, and thousands of scholars engaged in a scientific procedure related to literary criticism. Either literary criticism is a science, or all these highly trained and intelligent people are wasting their time on a pseudo-science, one to be ranked with phrenology and election forecasting. Yet one is forced to wonder whether scholars as a whole are consciously aware that the assumptions on which their work is based are scientific ones. In the growing complication of secondary sources which constitutes literary scholarship, one misses, for the most part, that sense of systematic progressive consolidation which belongs to a science. Research begins in what is known as "background," and one would expect it, as it goes on, to organize the foreground as well. The digging up of relevant information about a poet should lead to a steady consolidating progress in the criticism of his poetry. One feels a certain failure of nerve in coming out of the background into the foreground, and research seems to prefer to become centrifugal, moving away from the works of art into more and more research projects. I have noticed this particularly in two

fields in which I am interested, Blake and Spenser. For every critic of Spenser who is interested in knowing what, say, the fourth book of *The Faerie Queene* actually means as a whole, there are dozens who are interested primarily in how Spenser used Chaucer, Malory, and Ariosto in putting it together. So far as I know there is no book devoted to an analysis of the argument of *The Faerie Queene* itself, though there are any number on its sources, and, of course, background. As for Blake, I have read a whole shelf of books on his poetry by critics who did not know what any of his major poems meant. The better ones were distinguishable only by the fact that they did not boast of their ignorance.

The reason for this is that research is ancillary to criticism, but the critic to whom the researcher should entrust his materials hardly exists. What passes for criticism is mainly the work of critical readers or spokesmen of various critical attitudes, and these make, in general, a random and haphazard use of scholarship. Such criticism is therefore often regarded by the researcher as a subjective and regressive dilettantism, interesting in its place, but not real work. On the other hand, the critical reader is apt to treat the researcher as Hamlet did the grave-digger, ignoring everything he throws out except an odd skull that he can pick up and moralize about. Yet unless research consolidates into a criticism which preserves the scientific and systematic element in research, the literary scholar will be debarred by his choice of profession from ever making an immediately significant contribution to culture. The absence of direction in research is, naturally, clearest on the very lowest levels of all, where it is only a spasmodic laying of unfertilized eggs in order to avoid an administrative axe. Here the research is characterized by a kind of desperate tentativeness, an implied hope that some synthesizing critical Messiah of the future will find it useful. A philologist can show the relationship of even the most minute study of dialect to his subject as a whole, because philology is a properly organized science. But the researcher who collects all a poet's references to the sea or God or beautiful women does not know who will find this useful or in what ways it could be used, because he has no theory of imagery.

I am not, obviously, saying that literary scholarship at present is doing the wrong thing or should be doing something else: I am saying that it should be possible to get a clearer and more systematic comprehension of what it is doing. Most literary scholarship could be described as prior criticism (the so-called "lower" criticism of biblical scholarship), the editing of texts and the collecting of relevant facts.

Of the posterior (or "higher") criticism that is obviously the final cause of this work we have as yet no theory, no tradition, and above all no systematic organization. We have, of course, a good deal of the thing itself. There is even some good posterior criticism of Spenser, though most of it was written in the eighteenth century. And in every age the great scholar will do the right thing by the instinct of genius. But genius is rare, and scholarship is not.

II

Sciences normally begin in a state of naïve induction: they come immediately in contact with phenomena and take the things to be explained as their immediate data. Thus physics began by taking the immediate sensations of experience, classified as hot, cold, moist, and dry, as fundamental principles. Eventually physics turned inside out, and discovered that its real function was to explain what heat and moisture were. History began as chronicle; but the difference between the old chronicler and the modern historian is that to the chronicler the events he recorded were also the structure of history, whereas the historian sees these events as historical phenomena, to be explained in terms of a conceptual framework different in shape from them. Similarly each modern science has had to take what Bacon calls (though in another context) an inductive leap, occupying a new vantage ground from which it could see its former principles as new things to be explained. As long as astronomers regarded the movements of heavenly bodies as the *structure* of astronomy, they were compelled to regard their own point of view as fixed. Once they thought of movement as itself an explainable phenomenon, a mathematical theory of movement became the conceptual framework, and so the way was cleared for the heliocentric solar system and the law of gravitation. As long as biology thought of animal and vegetable forms of life as constituting its subject, the different branches of biology were largely efforts of cataloguing. As soon as it was the existence of forms of life themselves that had to be explained, the theory of evolution and the conceptions of protoplasm and the cell poured into biology and completely revitalized it.

It occurs to me that literary criticism is now in such a state of naïve induction as we find in a primitive science. Its materials, the masterpieces of literature, are not yet regarded as phenomena to be explained in terms of a conceptual framework which criticism alone possesses. They are still regarded as somehow constituting the framework or form of criticism as well. I suggest that it is time for criticism

to leap to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. And no one can examine the present containing forms of criticism without being depressed by an overwhelming sense of unreality. Let me give one example.

In confronting any work of literature, one obvious containing form is the genre to which it belongs. And criticism, incredible as it may seem, has as yet no coherent conception of genres. The very word sticks out in an English sentence as the unpronounceable and alien thing it is. In poetry, the common-sense Greek division by methods of performance, which distinguishes poetry as lyric, epic, or dramatic according to whether it is sung, spoken, or shown forth, survives vestigially. On the whole it does not fit the facts of Western poetry, though in Joyce's *Portrait* there is an interesting and suggestive attempt made to re-define the terms. So, apart from a drama which belongs equally to prose, a handful of epics recognizable as such only because they are classical imitations, and a number of long poems also called epics because they are long, we are reduced to the ignoble and slovenly practice of calling almost the whole of poetry "lyric" because the Greeks had no other word for it. The Greeks did not need to develop a classification of prose forms: we do, but have never done so. The circulating-library distinction between fiction and non-fiction, between books which are about things admitted not to be true and books which are about everything else, is apparently satisfactory to us. Asked what the forms of prose fiction are, the literary critic can only say, "well, er—the novel." Asked what form of prose fiction *Gulliver's Travels,* which is clearly not a novel, belongs to, there is not one critic in a hundred who could give a definite answer, and not one in a thousand who would regard the answer (which happens to be "Menippean satire") as essential to the critical treatment of the book. Asked what he is working on, the critic will invariably say that he is working on Donne, or Shelley's thought, or the period from 1640 to 1660, or give some other answer which implies that history, or philosophy, or literature itself, constitutes the structural basis of criticism. It would never occur to any critic to say, for instance, "I am working on the theory of genres." If he actually were interested in this, he would say that he was working on a "general" topic; and the work he would do would probably show the marks of naïve induction: that is, it would be an effort to classify and pigeonhole instead of clarifying the tradition of the genre.

If we do not know how to handle even the genre, the most obvious

of all critical conceptions, it is hardly likely that subtler instruments will be better understood. In any work of literature the characteristics of the language it is written in form an essential critical conception. To the philologist, literature is a function of language, its works linguistic documents, and to the philologist the phrase "English literature" makes sense. It ought not to make any sense at all to a literary critic. For while the philologist sees English literature as illustrating the organic growth of the English language, the literary critic can only see it as the miscellaneous pile of literary works that happened to get written in English. (I say in English, not in England, for the part of "English literature" that was written in Latin or Norman French has a way of dropping unobtrusively into other departments.) Language is an important secondary aspect of literature, but when magnified into a primary basis of classification it becomes absurdly arbitrary.

Critics, of course, maintain that they know this, and that they keep the linguistic categories only for convenience. But theoretical fictions have a way of becoming practical assumptions, and in no time the meaningless convenience of "English literature" expands into the meaningless inconvenience of the "history of English literature." Now, again, the historian must necessarily regard literature as an historical product and its works as historical documents. It is also quite true that the time a work was written in forms an essential critical conception. But again, to the literary critic, as such, the phrase "history of English literature" ought to mean nothing at all. If he doubts this, let him try writing one, and he will find himself confronted by an insoluble problem of form, or rather by an indissoluble amorphousness. The "history" part of his project is an abstract history, a bald chronicle of names and dates and works and influences, deprived of all the real historical interest that a real historian would give it, however much enlivened with discussions of "background." This chronicle is periodically interrupted by conventional judgments of value lugged in from another world, which confuse the history and yet are nothing by themselves. The *form* of literary history has not been discovered, and probably does not exist, and every successful one has been either a textbook or a *tour de force*. Linear time is not an exact enough category to catch literature, and all writers whatever are subtly belittled by a purely historical treatment.

Biography, a branch of history, presents a similar fallacy to the critic, for the biographer turns to a different job and a different kind

of book when he turns to criticism. Again, the man who wrote the poem is one of the legitimate containing forms of criticism. But here we have to distinguish the poet *qua* poet, whose work is a single imaginative body, from the poet as man, who is something else altogether. The latter involves us in what is known as the personal heresy, or rather the heroic fallacy. For a biographer, poetry is an emanation of a personality; for the literary critic it is not, and the problem is to detach it from the personality and consider it on impersonal merits. The no man's land between biography and criticism, the process by which a poet's impressions of his environment are transmuted into poetry, has to be viewed by biographer and critic from opposite points of view. The process is too complex ever to be completely unified, Lowes's *Road to Xanadu* being the kind of exception that goes a long way to prove the rule. In Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* a biographical narrative is followed by a critical analysis, and the break between them is so sharp that it is represented in the text by a space.

In all these cases, the same principle recurs. The critic is surrounded by biography, history, philosophy, and language. No one doubts that he has to familiarize himself with these subjects. But is his job only to be the jackal of the historian, the philologist, and the biographer, or can he use these subjects in his own way? If he is not to sell out to all his neighbours in turn, what is distinctive about his approach to the poet's life, the time when he lived, and the language he wrote? To ask this is to raise one of the problems involved in the whole question of what the containing forms of literature are as they take their place in the conceptual framework of criticism. This confronts me with the challenge to make my criticism of criticism constructive. All I have space to do is to outline what I think the first major steps should be.

We have to see what literature is, and try to distinguish the category of literature among all the books there are in the world. I do not know that criticism has made any serious effort to determine what literature is. Next, as discussed above, we should examine the containing forms of criticism, including the poet's life, his historical context, his language, and his thought, to see whether the critic can impose a unified critical form on these things, without giving place to or turning into a biographer, an historian, a philologist, or a philosopher. Next, we should establish the broad distinctions, such as that between prose and poetry, which are preparatory to working out a comprehensive theory of genres. I do not know that critics have clearly explained

what the difference between prose and poetry, for instance, really is. Then we should try to see whether the critic, like his neighbours the historian and the philosopher, lives in his own universe. To the historian there is nothing that cannot be considered historically; to the philosopher nothing that cannot be considered philosophically. Does the critic aspire to contain all things in criticism, and so swallow history and philosophy in his own synthesis, or must he be forever the historian's and philosopher's pupil? If I have shown up Arnold in a poor light, I should say that he is the only one I know who suggests that criticism can be, like history and philosophy, a total attitude to experience. And finally, since criticism may obviously deal with anything in a poem from its superficial texture to its ultimate significance, the question arises whether there are different levels of meaning in literature, and, if so, whether they can be defined and classified.

It follows that arriving at value-judgments is not, as it is so often said to be, part of the immediate tactic of criticism. Criticism is not well enough organized as yet to know what the factors of value in a critical judgment are. For instance, as was indicated above in connection with Blake and Spenser, the question of the quality of a poet's thinking as revealed in the integration of his argument is an essential factor in a value-judgment, but many poets are exhaustively discussed in terms of value without this factor being considered. Contemporary judgments of value come mainly from either the critical reader or from the spokesman of a critical attitude. That is, they must be on the whole either unorganized and tentative, or over-organized and irrelevant. For no one can jump directly from research to a value-judgment. I give one melancholy instance. I recently read a study of the sources of mythological allusions in some of the romantic poets, which showed that for the second part of *Faust* Goethe had used a miscellany of cribs, some of dubious authenticity. "I have now, I hope," said the author triumphantly at the end of his investigation, "given sufficient proof that the second part of *Faust* is not a great work of art." I do not deny the ultimate importance of the value-judgment. I would even consider the suggestion that the value-judgment is precisely what distinguishes the social from the natural science. But the more important it is, the more careful we should be about getting it solidly established.

What literature is may perhaps best be understood by an analogy. We shall have to labour the analogy, but that is due mainly to the novelty of the idea here presented. Mathematics appears to begin in the counting and measuring of objects, as a numerical commentary

on the world. But the mathematician does not think of his subject as the counting and measuring of physical objects at all. For him it is an autonomous language, and there is a point at which it becomes in a measure independent of that common field of experience which we think of as the physical world, or as existence, or as reality, according to our mood. Many of its terms, such as irrational numbers, have no direct connection with the common field of experience, but depend for their meaning solely on the interrelations of the subject itself. Irrational numbers in mathematics may be compared to prepositions in verbal languages, which, unlike nouns and verbs, have no external symbolic reference. When we distinguish pure from applied mathematics, we are thinking of the former as a disinterested conception of numerical relationships, concerned more and more with its inner integrity, and less and less with its reference to external criteria.

Where, in that case, is pure mathematics going? We may gain a hint from the final chapter of Sir James Jeans' *Mysterious Universe,* which I choose because it shows some of the characteristics of the imaginative leap to a new conceptual framework already mentioned. There, the author speaks of the failure of physical cosmology in the nineteenth century to conceive of the universe as ultimately mechanical, and suggests that a mathematical approach to it may have better luck. The universe cannot be a machine, but it may be an interlocking set of mathematical formulas. What this means is surely that pure mathematics exists in a mathematical universe which is no longer a commentary on an "outside" world, but contains that world within itself. Mathematics is at first a form of understanding an objective world regarded as its content, but in the end it conceives of the content as being itself mathematical in form, so that when the conception of the mathematical universe is reached, form and content become the same thing.

Jeans was a mathematician, and thought of his mathematical universe as *the* universe. Doubtless it is, but it does not follow that the only way of conceiving it is mathematical. For we think also of literature at first as a commentary on an external "life" or "reality." But just as in mathematics we have to go from three apples to three, and from a square field to a square, so in reading Jane Austen we have to go from the faithful reflection of English society to the novel, and pass from literature as symbol to literature as an autonomous language. And just as mathematics exists in a mathematical universe which is at the circumference of the common field of experience, so literature exists in a verbal universe, which is not a commentary on

life or reality, but contains life and reality in a system of verbal relationships. This conception of a verbal universe, in which life and reality are inside literature, and not outside it and being described or represented or approached or symbolized by it, seems to me the first postulate of a properly organized criticism.

It is vulgar for the critic to think of literature as a tiny palace of art looking out upon an inconceivably gigantic "life." "Life" should be for the critic only the seed-plot of literature, a vast mass of potential literary forms, only a few of which will grow up into the greater world of the verbal universe. Similar universes exist for all the arts. "We make to ourselves pictures of facts," says Wittgenstein, but by pictures he means representative illustrations, which are not pictures. Pictures as pictures are themselves facts, and exist only in a pictorial universe. It is easy enough to say that while the stars in their courses may form the subject of a poem, they will still remain the stars in their courses, forever outside poetry. But this is pure regression to the common field of experience, and nothing more; for the more strenuously we try to conceive the stars in their courses in non-literary ways, the more assuredly we shall fall into the idioms and conventions of some other mental universe. The conception of a constant external reality acts as a kind of censor principle in the arts. Painting has been much bedevilled by it, and much of the freakishness of modern painting is clearly due to the energy of its revolt against the representational fallacy. Music on the other hand has remained fairly free of it: at least no one, so far as I know, insists that it is flying in the face of common sense for music to do anything but reproduce the sounds heard in external nature. In literature the chief function of representationalism is to neutralize its opposing fallacy of an "inner" or subjective reality.

These different universes are presumably different ways of conceiving the same universe. What we call the common field of experience is a provisional means of unifying them on the level of sense-perception, and it is natural to infer a higher unity, a sort of beatification of common sense. But it is not easy to find any human language capable of reaching such exalted heights. If it is true, as is being increasingly asserted, that metaphysics is a system of verbal constructions with no direct reference to external criteria by means of which its truth or falsehood may be tested, it follows that metaphysics forms part of the verbal universe. Theology postulates an ultimate reality in God, but it does not assume that man is capable of describing it in his own terms, nor does it claim to be itself such a

description. In any case, if we assert this final unity too quickly we may injure the integrity of the different means of approaching it. It does not help a poet much to tell him that the function of literature is to empty itself into an ocean of super-verbal significance, when the nature of that significance is unknown.

Pure mathematics, we have said, does not relate itself directly to the common field of experience, but indirectly, not to avoid it, but with the ultimate design of swallowing it. It thus presents the appearance of a series of hypothetical possibilities. It by-passes the confirmation from without which is the goal of applied mathematics, and seeks it only from within: its conclusions are related primarily to its own premises. Literature also proceeds by hypothetical possibilities. The poet, said Sidney, never affirmeth. He never says "this is so"; he says "let there be such a situation," and poetic truth, the validity of his conclusion, is to be tested primarily by its coherence with his original postulate. Of course, there is applied literature, just as there is applied mathematics, which we test historically, by its lifelikeness, or philosophically, by the cogency of its propostions. Literature, like mathematics, is constantly useful, a word which means having a continuing relationship to the common field of experience. But pure literature, like pure mathematics, is disinterested, or useless: it contains its own meaning. Any attempt to determine the category of literature must start with a distinction between the verbal form which is primarily itself and the verbal form which is primarily related to something else. The former is a complex verbal fact, the latter a complex of verbal symbols.

We have to use the mathematical analogy once more before we leave it. Literature is, of course, dependent on the haphazard and unpredictable appearance of creative genius. So actually is mathematics, but we hardly notice this because in mathematics a steady consolidating process goes on, and the work of its geniuses is absorbed in the evolving and expanding pattern of the mathematical universe. Literature being as yet unorganized by criticism, it still appears as a huge aggregate or miscellaneous pile of creative efforts. The only organizing principle so far discovered in it is chronology, and when we see the miscellaneous pile strung out along a chronological line, some coherence is given to it by the linear factors in tradition. We can trace an epic tradition by virtue of the fact that Virgil succeeded Homer, Dante Virgil, and Milton Dante. But, as already suggested, this is very far from being the best we can do. Criticism has still to develop a theory of literature which will see this aggregate within a

verbal universe, as forms integrated within a total form. An epic, besides occurring at a certain point in time, is also something of a definitive statement of the poet's imaginative experience, whereas a lyric is usually a more fragmentary one. This suggests the image of a kind of radiating circle of literary experience in which the lyric is nearer to a periphery and the epic nearer to a centre. It is only an image, but the notion that literature, like any other form of knowledge, possesses a centre and a circumference seems reasonable enough.

If so, then literature is a single body, a vast organically growing form, and, though of course works of art do not improve, yet it may be possible for criticism to see literature as showing a progressive evolution in time, of a kind rather like what Newman postulates for Catholic dogma. One could collect remarks by the dozen from various critics, many of them quite misleading, to show that they are dimly aware, on some level of consciousness, of the possibility of a critical progress toward a total comprehension of literature which no critical history gives any hint of. When Mr. Eliot says that the whole tradition of Western poetry from Homer down ought to exist simultaneously in the poet's mind, the adverb suggests a transcending by criticism of the tyranny of historical categories. I even think that the consolidation of literature by criticism into the verbal universe was one of the things that Matthew Arnold meant by culture. To begin this process seems to me the function of criticism at the present time.

GERHART HAUPTMANN

MARGARET SINDEN

THE death of Gerhart Hauptmann in the spring of 1946 brought to a close one of the longest and most distinguished literary careers in recent history. The first of the plays which were to make him famous appeared in 1889, and it was followed by a series of works of such power that for the past third of a century Germans in general have regarded him as the first of their living poets. No English author, I should say since Dickens, has occupied a similar place in the mind of any large section of the English public.

Hauptmann's career was as varied as it was long. Until shortly before the First Great War he devoted himself in the main to the prose drama, to a realistic portrayal of contemporary life in Germany. But from an early date he had begun also to write verse plays, and from about 1912 his attention was drawn increasingly from realistic prose to verse, to symbol and philosophy; from Germany to Greece, America, the South Sea Islands, or simply into the realm of vision and myth; and even from drama to novel, *Novelle,* and verse epic. In an attempt to order this variety, critics have generally adopted some version of the two-souls-in-one-breast theory, and have considered Hauptmann as a man in whom naturalism struggled with romanticism, or Germany with Greece, or the rationalist cynic with the religious mystic. Any of these solutions may have much to be said for it, but they are all inadequate in the last analysis, I think, for one reason, because they ride rough-shod over obvious inequalities in Hauptmann's work, and, taking attempt for achievement, give to bad works and good an equally positive value. Also any sharp and distinct cleavage is foreign to what we know of Hauptmann as a man, and foreign to the characters which he created.

We must rather, I suggest, proceed from the assumption that if one group of works, fairly uniform in style, surpasses in bulk, and, on the whole, in excellence, any other group, there we shall find the essential Hauptmann, if such there be. This group undoubtedly exists in the realistic prose dramas, predominantly tragedies, which he wrote between 1889 and 1911, together with the greatest tragedy of them all, the novel *Emanuel Quint.* What inspired them? What do they say? If we can ascertain this, it should not only make clear to us the basic elements of Hauptmann's genius, but it should help us also to understand why, in his other works, he sometimes succeeded, but sometimes failed. It is only reasonable to expect further that the best of (let us say) his verse dramas should be those which are also fundamentally closest to the major group, which indeed proves to be the case.

In the *Abenteuer meiner Jugend,* in which he has described in great detail his early years, Hauptmann tells us at one point that as his body sat stiff on the bench of his Breslau schoolroom, he developed the faculty of seeing, through the walls, the activities of his family, friends, and himself at home. He tells us further that, when he left school and began to work on his uncle's farm, he had to be up long before the dawn, helping the peasants in barn or stable, and that these early morning hours held a peculiar fascination for his mind, half numbed as it was, half strangely lucid, from constant overwork. Later, as an art student in Breslau, he often wandered through the streets as night was ending, eyes and ears wide open to catch the first stirrings of the city returning to life, and carrying on conversations with himself, the imagined conversations of those whom he saw. Out of such experience was born the poet of the works which are our first and foremost concern. That which had impressed Hauptmann's senses, tuned to a more than normal state of awareness, dissolved within, until so to speak, the solution became supersaturated, and, usually at a touch from without, the process of crystallization, of re-creation, set in. Then he wrote quickly, and fragments of unfinished works which have been published show that he began with settings and snatches of dialogue. The first of these touches was notoriously the casual suggestion of Arno Holz that Hauptmann, at that time twenty-seven years old, and still not quite certain of his vocation, collaborate with him in the writing of a play. What Hauptmann answered, or whether he answered at all, we do not know. He had just seen, and been greatly impressed by Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness.* At any rate he did not collaborate, but produced by himself, in two months, the grim and powerful picture of a disintegrating Silesian peasant family which Holz christened *Vor Sonnenaufgang,* and hailed as the greatest play which had ever been written in German.

With one exception, the other works of this group are set, like *Vor Sonnenaufgang,* in scenes which Hauptmann knew well: in Silesia, in and about Berlin, on an island in the Baltic. The characters and their situations were equally real to him: the problems of a young scholar caught between the orthodox pietism of his parents and contemporary scientific materialism; the revolt of the Silesian weavers of whom his father had told him as a boy and whose descendants still lived, under similar conditions, near his home; the triumphant progress in petty thievery of a washerwoman of the Berlin suburbs; the attempts of a father to check the disintegration of his morbid but gifted son; and, not to forget the favourite theme of

the German bourgeois tragedy, the fate of an unmarried mother. The sensitiveness and impressionability of the watcher before the dawn are evident at every point in Hauptmann's reproduction of these people and their fates. He never loses his firm and amazingly sure grip on outer reality, but he uses it, as he uses everything at his disposal—dialogue, situation, setting—as means for the constant revelation of the warm, breathing, pulsating life of those whom he portrays; and with such effect that, whether he describes a coffin-maker crossing the sand dunes of an island in the Baltic, or the daughter of a Breslau innkeeper maintaining a precarious balance between the dignity expected by the occasional guests and the familiarity demanded by those regular patrons, the gentlemen of the *Stammtisch,* we never forget them.

He senses and records, in the first place, the finest shades of tone and expression: the flavour of a dialect, the slight strain of polite social intercourse, the easy colloquialisms of work and family, the domestic volubility of a middle-aged woman, the whining insinuations of a precocious adolescent. He first catches our attention, in fact, because it is a joy to listen to his people talk, and he holds it through even the seemingly most casual conversation by a sharp and subtle play of voice against voice, of undertone and overtone, which keeps us constantly aware of all the conflicting currents and eddies.

For plot or outer action he has little use. Indeed he spoke against them with a sharpness most unusual in him. "Wherever," he once wrote, "you come across that thing which a damaging criticism characterizes as 'action,' take whatever you find, . . . an axe, or a club, or the first stone which comes to your hand, and strike it dead."[1] He prefers to bring his people together at moments which follow decisive encounters, and thus to direct our attention always away from "what happens?" to "what is the effect of the happening?"—from the event itself to its reverberations within the individual. The most famous example of his use of this technique is *Florian Geyer,* the story of the sixteenth-century Peasants' Revolt, which unrolls not only without battle, but almost entirely without the councils and plans which lead to battle. Other instances, equally effective if less obvious, are to be found wherever we turn, one of the most notable in the fourth act of *Rose Bernd.*

Here Rose, the peasant girl, appears before an older married couple, the Flamms, the invalid wife who has befriended her and the husband whom Rose loves. She comes directly from the law court,

[1] *Ausblicke* (Berlin, 1922), 20.

where, forced by her stubborn and self-righteous father, she is defending herself against the insinuations of a local gallant who has used his knowledge of her love for Flamm for his own benefit, and then talked too freely. Long ago, from her wheel chair, the keen-eyed Frau Flamm had perceived part of the truth, and she has offered Rose her help; it doesn't matter who the man is, she says, it is we who have to bear the children. Now she has just learned that her husband has been called to give evidence in Rose's case. She puts two and two together—and Flamm makes no attempt to deny that he is probably the father of the coming child, of which he, in his turn, has known nothing until this moment. Haggard, defiant, in her Sunday clothes, Rose faces the shaken and bewildered couple. Under solemn oath she has just denied all charges. She denies again now, until through her distant politeness breaks the hysterical admission, "I was ashamed." Otherwise nothing happens. Rose goes away again. But the scene has sent lightning flashing back through all the tangled relationships of these three, to the days when Rose, as a child, had been drawn by the Flamms into their house, because the memory of a dead boy held together his parents and his favourite playmate. Present and past are linked and contrasted in such a manner that the innermost being is revealed, as Shakespeare reveals it in the monologues of Macbeth, for example, or of Othello.

With the same skill Hauptmann uses what we must, for want of a better word, call background. The rooms in which his characters live, the ground under their feet, class, occupation, and religion, the state of the nation and the state of science, all of these give them colour and tangibility; through these are refracted whatever common and unchanging forces move mankind. But the light which shapes contours can also blend and penetrate, become mood, atmosphere, symbol. Thus he melts individual into group in *Die Weber,* for generations of malnutrition, generations of economic slavery and uncertainty, uncounted hours of work in dark rooms have here stamped characters with common traits, physically and mentally: thin, bent, wax-pale bodies, humility which is almost obsequiousness, and a capacity for infinite patience and endurance. In *Die Ratten,* the Berlin tenement house in which the action takes place sets the pitch. In its upper rooms a theatre director, at present without a theatre, keeps his properties and costumes—costumes for the tragedies of Schiller, rhetorical, heroic, idealistic. Below, the crowded rooms swarm with the families of working men and with a rabble of dubious nature. The symbol is clear: costumes and oratory above,

hunger and crime below, the rats which undermine the brilliant façade of imperial Germany. Comedy above and tragedy below, but the same air fills the whole house, and the comedy has its serious undertone, the figures of the tragedy are tinged with comedy, or with the grotesque.

Yet another play, *Gabriel Schillings Flucht,* is dominated by the sea. For the self-contained and mature pair, the artist Ottfried Mäurer and his beloved Lucie Heil, who come every fall from Berlin to the island of Fischermanns Oye, the weeks spent there are a vital experience which contributes to the integrity of their persons. "Diese Klarheit," says Mäurer, "dieses stumme und mächtige Strömen des Lichtes! Dazu die Freiheit im Wandern über die pfadlose Grastafel. Dazu der Salzgeschmack auf den Lippen. Das geradezu bis zu Tränen erschütternde Brausen der See,—siehst du, hier hinter der Brille ist noch ein Tropfen!—Dieses satte, strahlende Maestoso, womit sie ihre Brandung ausrollen lässt. Köstlich!"[2] In this transparent atmosphere, he admits, men regain their sense of another world, close enough to knock on. But he warns Lucie, whose mother has recently died, not to knock too persistently; such rashness can be dangerous; such ghosts drink blood. To which Lucie protests that she is not upset but serene in the confidence that she is in contact with her mother—"Es ist mir heiter. Es ist mir nicht aufwühlend. Ich wiege mich einfach in dem bestimmten Bewusstsein, dass ich mit Mutter verbunden bin." The matter is different for their friend Gabriel Schilling, who has fled from the "night cafés and stinking asphalt" of Berlin, from the bickering of his wife and the tentacles of his mistress, reduced to a point where he cannot endure the ticking of a clock, because it accuses him of the years he has lost, the work undone. For him the sea is purification, and more—escape. When the two women arrive on the scene and take up the fight for possession in one brief, revolting encounter, it becomes oblivion. In the darkness and oncoming storm Mäurer and Lucie, reconciled to his solution, watch the fishermen bringing in his body. Not only have words created for us sea and sand and air, but the sea and its influence, real and irrational, has provided the light by which we see the faces of those who come down to it.

The inner life, which Hauptmann thus seeks to reveal, means for

[2]"This clearness, this silent and mighty streaming of the light. And the freedom to wander over the pathless turf. And the taste of salt on your lips. The roaring of the sea, which can positively shake you to tears—look, there's still a drop on the inside of my glasses!—The full and radiant *maestoso* with which it sends the surf rolling along. Wonderful!"

him indeed the irrational life, the life of instinct and emotion—on the one hand the most fundamental urges of hunger and sex, on the other friendship, pity, love, illusions, dreams, faith; and he has the greatest acuteness and sensitivity in tracing the refinements and sublimations which lead from the one to the other. Wide as his range is in secondary and minor characters, his main characters, we find, are chosen from those groups on which such irrational forces work most strongly, where environment too assumes the aspect of an irrational force—either from the people, whose lives are dominated by the struggle for existence, food, shelter, children; or from among those nervous, finely constituted beings, potential artists, whose innate creative faculties cannot find their legitimate expression, and who are destroyed under the double assault of bourgeois conventions and the intoxications of sex or alcohol. We may cite Rose Bernd, moved by an urge as elemental as that of the fruitful spring earth under her feet; Hannele, driven by hunger and cold and her father's blows to attempted suicide; and Arnold Kramer, son of an artist and more gifted than his father, but misshapen, who sees the whole world, with the exception of one girl, distorted into caricature. So strong is Hauptmann's sense of the power of these irrational forces that his people appear at times almost hypnotized, carried along a stream into which they sink or are dragged down, not without intense suffering, not without protest, but without real or vigorous struggle. At the most they act blindly, impulsively, like Rose Bernd, who denies where denial is clearly impossible; for the most part they succumb and take their own lives, like Arnold Kramer or Gabriel Schilling.

But also, they turn inward, in part to brood and dream. Every spring and every fall since he was sixteen, says Gabriel Schilling, he has travelled in his imagination—"mittels einer sehr lebhaften Phantasie"—to Greece. Again and again, like the beads of a broken rosary, Carter Henschel tells over his misfortunes, trying in vain to find the thread, to account for them in terms of his own guilt. Such dreams and the illusions which accompany them may be symptoms, expressions, of disintegration, but not always and not solely for they are also, Hauptmann knows, a refinement of the life-force by means of which the individual preserves his sense of the importance of the entity "I," and without which he would dissolve and perish. The famous "Ein jeder Mensch hat halt 'ne Sehnsucht "—Every man has some longing—from *Die Weber,* is one of many formulations of this realization, and not merely, as early critics tended to interpret it, a rather pretty touch by which Hauptmann was attempting to

brighten his picture of grim reality. The weavers themselves are driven to revolt not by hunger alone but by a desire for a breath of air, by a sense nourished in them by the very religion which preaches the overcoming of the world, that all humans are children of God, and that their fate is incompatible with any sense of human dignity. In a lighter vein we have the amazing Crampton, whose wonderfully facile tongue talks himself and almost the spectator into the illusion that he is not a decaying alcoholic but a great artist, whom the world, and his wife, fail to understand. But the supreme refinement appears in those who, with eyes sharpened by their own suffering, offer their understanding and compassion to their fellow sufferers. "When Eros was persecuted," wrote Hauptmann in a recently published series of meditations entitled *Sonnen,* "he appeared as Christ." So we find Käthe Vockerat, whose desperate attempts to help and understand her nervous and irritable young husband drive her to the utmost in self-sacrifice, or August Keil, the betrothed of Rose Bernd, an outcast brought up in an orphanage, pale and ill, whose love and pity flow toward her at the end as from a clear and inexhaustible fountain.

Hauptmann's longest and most profound study in sublimation however, and the point at which he has come to his closest grips with the mysticism of his native Silesia, is the novel *The Fool in Christ (Der Narr in Christo, Emanuel Quint),* the story of the development of a red-headed carpenter's son who leaves his father's bench to preach the gospel of repentance and love, bores himself deeper and deeper into the New Testament, until in due course of time he sees in a vision the figure of Christ, even to the pale freckles at the base of the quivering nostrils, feels in every pulse-beat and drop of his blood the gentle invincible force with which the divine form melts into his own, and so slowly, not in pride but in humility, in the conviction that he must not and cannot throw off the burden which has been placed on his shoulders, finds himself answering to those who crowd around him with anxious questions, that what is reborn in the spirit is spirit, and that in this sense he *is* the son of God. From the beginning men seek him: those who, like himself, belong to the wretched of the earth; and beside them the lay brothers and disciples of Herrnhut, or the young and hopeful of those days when men, "in all seriousness, counted on a general and mighty collapse of society which was to come at the latest in the year 1900, and renew the world." On the periphery of the novel loom socialist reformers, in their hands the *Communist Manifesto.* But their way is not Quint's.

"Love," he says, and "love" again. In the end comes the bitter recognition that men cannot accept the absolute, cannot comprehend that the kingdom has nothing to do with the flesh or the healing of the flesh, that it is useless to pour love into the furnace of the world's hatred; until with the weary, "Aber alles ist müssig"—But all is in vain—he vanishes from Silesia. In the spring a frozen body is found, high in the Gotthard.

In the novel, as in the plays, the development of the hero has the stamp of inevitability. With a sureness and an insight which are miraculous, Hauptmann follows the path which leads the shunned stepson of the earthly father into the arms of the heavenly, into the realm of mystic experience, of divine intoxication. But the novel is interesting not only for itself but because of the light which it throws on the general problem, mystic or dramatist; and mysticism as an absolute excludes, I should suggest, the possibility of drama. Now the novel has a narrator, who cannot maintain his distance. He begins, so to speak, objectively, with psychology, and then moves in to identify himself with his hero, and remark, for example, and his tone is clearly sarcastic, "For Quint, like all fools, took his madness for wisdom, and his weakness for strength." But, was he a fool?—or not? Having moved in, Hauptmann cannot quite forget that there are people for whom Quint is merely a pathological case, a fool indeed; and he moves out again. So, for all his defence of his hero and for all the vividness and insight with which he portrays Quint's visions, he stops short of the complete acceptance which marks the true mystic. In truth, Quint himself stops short also. He would not otherwise depart despairing in the face of the suffering of the world with the words, "Aber alles ist müssig." For to the true mystic, love is the only reality and pain and suffering are no longer problems. But for Hauptmann the problem, both intellectual and emotional, remains. One consequence is that he moves more surely in what he once called the "productive scepticism" of the drama than in the novel[3]; the other that he is led not only to drama, but to tragedy.

Implicitly the plays tell us the same story, namely that Hauptmann, who once said that the highest form of human life appeared to him to be serenity—"als höchste menschliche Lebensform erscheint mir die Heiterkeit"[4]—and whose sense of the power and beauty of the creative forces which spring from the earth and draw men together and upward is so strong that he embodied it again and again

[3]*Um Volk und Geist* (Berlin, 1932), 23.
[4]*Griechischer Frühling* in *Werke* (Berlin, 1922), VI, 53.

in convincing human form, is at the same time and almost before all else intensely sensitive to suffering, and constantly aware of the perils from within and without which menace the peaceful development for which he longs.

Menace in abundance he saw before him in his youth, as the industrial revolution overtook Germany at bewildering speed and as bourgeois and Christian idealism came under the sharp focus of the new scientific enlightenment; he saw economic hardship and injustice, an older generation shaken out of its security and the weaker or more finely constituted of the younger falling by the wayside; he saw, with the eyes of a biologist, that men had not yet adapted themselves to the sidewalks which they had built between their feet and the earth which their ancestors had trodden for countless generations. The sharpness of his perception inevitably led to the symbolism of *Die Ratten,* the basic humanity of his temperament to the championship of the revolting weavers, or to the sharp ridicule which he turned in *Der Biberpelz* against that blindly impassioned hunter of socialists, Wehrhahn. Yet we should note that he is not consciously setting out to mould his material into a demonstration of social or political ideas or ideals; he is not even interested in the rational delineation of the effects of social change on group or individual, though everywhere he discerns their shaping force. Just as the rapid material expansion of the era dances visions of carriages and theatrical careers for her daughters before the eyes of the proletarian Mother Wolff, so the railways thunder in the ears of Henschel, and they, along with so much else, threaten his once secure and simple life. Hauptmann sees, but he does not rationalize. For he is not only so shaken by what he beholds that he fears that love may not prevail, he is also too deeply absorbed in the life of his characters to find in rationalization an adequate answer to their problems. Further, the contemporary scene, though it is very important, is only the contemporary scene, the present phase of the eternal problems of suffering and destruction.

There are also the perils from within. The more deeply Hauptmann sees into his people, the more painfully he realizes how profoundly each individual is separated from all others, how difficult it is for a man to break through the convictions or ideals which make life possible for him, to an understanding of others. Beneath it all there lurks a sense (nourished by the uneasy suspicions of his pietist blood that the suffering entailed by desire is to be overcome only by the overcoming of desire) if not that there is no creation without pain, then at least that the very forces of creation, instinct, the life-

force, blind and imperious as it is, can so easily, so inexplicably, work violence and destruction. I have previously noted that his characters appear at times almost entranced in the grip of these irrational forces; which would account for the fact that he shows very little sense of the sharp conflict of opposing forces within the individual. If he seems also to have very little understanding for the battle of an aggressive personality with the world, it would appear to stem in part from this same consciousness of the helplessness of men, but also, and almost instinctively, from a disinclination to burden his heroes with the task of inflicting the pain which strong action inevitably brings, and from which he shrank. Mother Wolff is the only one of the characters of these plays who acts resolutely and energetically, and her stealing, of course, really hurts no one. Hauptmann's apprehension of an ever-immanent, irrational menace is at any rate so strong that he uses his "productive scepticism," and without ever going beyond the bounds of the subjective impressions of his characters, attempts to give an emotional equivalent of the older tragedy of fate, whereby other than human forces of evil break through the earth to play with the lives of men. For Rose Bernd and Henschel alike snares have been set to catch them. In *Gabriel Schillings Flucht* Mäurer is similarly convinced that supernatural forces are working to destroy the hero. For though the doctor who arrives from Berlin to tend Schilling accounts for his breakdown with the simple, "The disease has been in him for a decade," to Mäurer, Schilling has been hunted to death by a ghost. "Ein Gespenst," "eine blutlose Fratze," "ein lemurischer Wechselbalg"—a ghost, a bloodless mask, a ghastly changeling—are his usual terms for Schilling's mistress, Hanna Elias.

Nevertheless (and this is one of the great virtues of these plays), sensitive as Hauptmann is, he is not obsessed with the vision of a suffering world to the point of distortion, of narrowly subjective interpretation. Some of his characters are indeed pathological, but his treatment of them justifies his assertion that the sorting of the healthy and the ill is the business of the doctor and not of the artist, that the bounds of the so-called healthy and normal are in any case overstepped in moments of passion, and that he must take men as he finds them and not confine himself to dealing with a fragment of a man.[5] Though he was shaken into tragedy, his vision remains broad and objective, his focus straight and just. He is quick again and again to catch the humour of a situation, keenly appreciative of the skill with which Mother Wolff handles the local police, aware of the

[5] *Ausblicke*, 21-2.

strength of those who, like Mäurer and Lucie Heil, are self-reliant and self-contained. Moreover, it would seem as though the more clearly Hauptmann saw men caught within the web of instinct or material forces or fate, the greater his need to insist upon the redeeming forces of love and humanity, to heighten our sense of the value and beauty of the sufferer. Hence he surrounds the defeated Florian Geyer with a lyric, elegiac tenderness; he embodies the visions which fill the fevered mind of the child Hannele, and lets them pass before her, and us, with unparalleled sweetness and fragrance; and his eyes pierce all veils, turn a man inside out, until with understanding comes identification on the part of the spectator, until he too has found the "moment of beauty,"[6] which, to use Hauptmann's own words again, lies immanent in every object.

One of the most remarkable of his attempts in this last direction is the portrait of Arnold Kramer. He appears to us at the beginning as a distasteful individual, crooked within and without, standing in front of a mirror examining impurities in his skin and mocking and making faces at his mother as she tries to impress him with the wickedness of the dissolute life which he is leading. But from here we are led step by step until our sense of repulsion vanishes in pity, as we watch the boy tormented by a philistine world, and as we see his pallor deepen and his face become increasingly distorted in the effort to conceal from his father his infatuation for an innkeeper's daughter because, strangely, just here burns the last clear, golden spark of his life which he dare not uncover. In the end, death is only the final step which makes the genius within outwardly visible. "Was jetzt auf seinem Gesichte liegt," says his father, "das alles hat in ihm gelegen. Das fühlt' ich, das wusst' ich, das kannt' ich in ihm und konnte ihn doch nicht heben, den Schatz. Sehn Se, nun hat ihn der Tod gehoben. Nun ist alles voll Klarheit um ihn her." And Michael Kramer's lament for the dead becomes a hymn to death: "Die Liebe, sagt man, ist stark wie der Tod. Aber kehren Se getrost den Satz mal um: der Tod ist auch mild wie die Liebe, Lachmann. . . . Der Tod ist die mildeste Form des Lebens, der ewigen Liebe Meisterstück."[7]

Such is Hauptmann, the "realist." That this is basically and essentially the true Hauptmann is borne out by those other works,

[6] *Ibid.*, 8.

[7] "All that you see now on his face—it all lay in him. I felt that, I knew it, I knew it was in him, and yet I could not raise the treasure. Now death has raised it. Now all around him is clearness. . . . Love, they say, is as strong as death. But that sentence can be easily reversed. Death is as gentle as love, Lachmann. . . . Death is the gentlest form of life, the masterpiece of eternal love."

be it verse drama or verse or prose epic, in which realism, in the sense of a detailed reproduction of the physical world and social setting, is a less important factor. For here too he remains first and foremost a tragedian, and he is at his best when his way leads not from the abstract but through the concrete, not from the general, but through the psyche of specific human beings, when a landscape (Greece for example) or the people who live in history, legend, and poetry have taken the same strong hold on him as those whom he knew in his youth. Thus poetic drama, for example, does not necessarily, in itself, pose for Hauptmann a new or different problem from prose, though he may well have felt after 1914 that the framework of realism was no longer adequate to cope with the magnitude of events, with the war and the subsequent German breakdown. Also he may have needed the distance afforded him by legend or history in order to be able to deal with them at all. But the main difference is that here, and above all in verse epic, the direct contact which he needed was sometimes broken; he sometimes tried to run counter to his own genius, and did not succeed. He quite comprehensibly sought relief from the strain of tragedy; he sought to embody his ideal of serenity. He sought also to speak in his own voice, as a seer and an interpreter. The very scope and variety of his later work makes it clear, even without a long series of parallels (*Till Eulenspiegel* with *Faust, Anna* with *Hermann und Dorothea, Hamlet in Wittenberg* with *Wilhelm Meister,* and so on), that he had, in such attempts, at least one eye on Goethe, the man who had mastered life, who strove in his workshop with divine purpose and human hand to evoke and call forth man, "den Menschen."[8] These works make it clear that Hauptmann was attempting to do the same for the men of his own generation, in his own way, and yet in a way which was not always fundamentally his own.

For when he sets out to attack the problems of the world by direct onslaught, to place idea or conception before individual or picture, to philosophize or use deliberate, intellectually conceived symbolism, or to leave the medium of the human behind for the realm of mythological visions, then we must, I think, admit that in the ensuing works not only does he have little to say, but that what he wishes to say he does not express well. His philosophy is apt to resolve itself into platitude, if it resolves itself at all. The symbolism is often merely perplexing, and the only way out of the difficulty is to fall back on his own truly enlightening explanation of the last act of

[8] *Griechischer Frühling,* 99.

Und Pippa tanzt, namely, "Ja, was schwebte mir nicht alles vor" —Well, I had all kinds of things in mind.[9] The verse in such works (and Hauptman could write verse powerfully and distinctively) has a tendency to stumble or jingle or relax into jarring colloquialisms. By and large, also, the characters become thin, their outlines indistinct; they appear cowed by the magnitude of the task which is, too obviously, being thrust upon them. An example is Till Eulenspiegel, former combat flier and hero of an epic which has been hailed as the third part of *Faust,* who does essentially nothing but lament, to the tune of the fool's bells which he has fastened to his helmet, the plight of Germany and all mankind, who drops a tear as he passes under the Brandenburger Tor and suffers an overwhelming series of apocalyptical visions until a happier dream carries him to Greece and a thousand years of pastoral bliss with Baubo, the robust nurse of Demeter. The work reveals unmistakably that Hauptmann is sincerely alarmed by the world of 1922; and it has passages which, as pure description, are extraordinarily vivid and beautiful. But it is out of joint. The reader is irritated, now by Till's mawkishness, now by his jangling bells; we become faint under the ceaseless downpourings of cosmic terror and evil. In a realistic drama, the hero, with his dreams sharply reduced, would be interesting and significant. As the exponent of St. Augustine's "Life is nothing but a comedy of the human race, leading from temptation to temptation," he is, to say the least, inadequate. In short, if I may use the word relatively rather than absolutely, but still quite definitely, such works are experiments which failed—which is neither surprising nor alarming. Hauptmann will live without them. The only cause for alarm is that some recent critics take them far too seriously.

In the search for serenity also, though to a lesser degree, Hauptmann sometimes forced his genius and paid the price of a certain superficiality. Into a number of plays, *Schluck und Jau, Die Jungfern vom Bischofsberg, Die Tochter der Kathedrale,* for example, he tried to breathe the heightened atmosphere of Shakespeare's romances, and his breath becomes a little short, his characters somewhat remote and artificial. Moreover, he did not always succeed in remaining serene even when he set out to do so. *Das Hirtenlied,* with its beautiful account of the poet whose good angel carried him from back alleys and cellars smelling of alcohol to the clear and sunny stretches of Laban's meadows and there permitted him to take on Jacob's form, never got past a fragmentary fourth act, and, I suspect, because

[9]H. von Hülsen, *Gerhart Hauptmann* (Leipzig, 1927), 121.

Hauptmann found that under his hands the triangle Leah-Rachel-Jacob was becoming all too painful a problem. In other cases he did not stop in time. It is something of a shock to the reader when the realization seeps through to him, toward the end of the narrative poem *Anna,* that the girl at whom Hauptmann has been aiming, not very adroitly, the playful arrows of the pastoral, is in reality the victim of circumstances so tragic as to make her a full sister of Rose Bernd.

More complicated is the problem of his debt to Greece. His interest in Greek literature and his journey to that country in 1907 encouraged him in his philosophical and mythological attempts. Yet fundamentally the contact was fruitful, and his experiences in Greece repeated his experiences in Germany. For if he sought and found there renewed assurance of beauty and harmony, he found also the dark underground which cast its shadow on the bright Homeric gods of Olympus.

Greece itself, we learn from the travel-journal, *Griechischer Frühling,* was to him a series of lovely hills and valleys, peopled by shepherds and historical dreams. "Ein kleines idyllisches Tal für Hirten," he describes Olympia, "eine schlichte beschränkte Wirklichkeit"—A small, idyllic valley for shepherds, a simple, finite reality. The creative powers of this beautiful land, he felt, streamed warmly and immediately into the blood of those who lived there and had lived there, legendary heroes and gods alike, for the Greek gods were gods of nature, of this world. Again and again he found himself reminded of Germany, above all of the peaceful valleys of Thuringia; but here the complicated and often perverting framework of modern European civilization was remote. In its place, however, he found the red rock walls of the theatre at Delphi, and to him they still reeked with the blood of sacrifice. Tragedy, he remembered, is merely ennobled human sacrifice to incomprehensible forces of evil. Tragedy for the Greeks, he wrote, means: "Feindschaft, Verfolgung, Angst, Not, Gefahr, Pein, . . . Verbrechen, Mord, Schlächterei. . . . Eine wahre Tragödie sehen hiess, beinahe zu Stein erstarrt, das Angesicht der Medusa erblicken, es hiess das Entsetzen vorwegnehmen, wie es das Leben heimlich immer, selbst für den Günstling des Glücks, in Bereitschaft hat."[10]

Such experiences were vivid and compelling, and they did much to enrich his later work. A decade after, for example, the faith in

[10]"Tragedy means hostility, persecution, fear, distress, danger, pain, . . . crime, murder, butchery. . . . To see a true tragedy meant, petrified almost to stone, to catch sight of the face of the Medusa; it meant to anticipate the horror which life ever holds ready, in secret, even for the darling of fortune."

nature which Greece had renewed and strengthened in him found powerful expression in *Der Ketzer von Soana,* in which he let his hero, his priestly scruples melting from him like snow under the imperious sun of a southern spring, sink into the intoxicated rapture of procreation, surrender to his erotic dream as the heroes of the realistic dramas surrender, but with the difference that, this time, the tragedy was held off, and he left Francesco happy in his mountain retreat, repeating "eros, eros." More important yet however was the role which the Greek inspiration played in some of his verse dramas, the best of which, notably *Der arme Heinrich, Der Bogen des Odysseus, Die Winterballade, Veland,* and the Iphigenia trilogy which he wrote between 1940 and 1944, stand beside the realistic prose plays, a smaller but equally distinguished group.

Rising from his music-impregnated prose he evolves here, in blank verse or in the trimeter of *Veland,* a medium as untouched as his prose by *Pathos* or rhetoric, at once fresh and strong in texture, almost primitive in its reality and tangibility, its terse simplicity, and almost startling in the forcefulness and iridescent colour of imagery and description: strange and livid as the midnight sun in *Die Winterballade,* dense and sombre as the northern sea in *Veland,* charged with joy and radiance at the close of *Der arme Heinrich,* where the jubilation of the knights is tempered, and our sense of the profound miracle which love has wrought in healing the hero of his leprosy is intensified, by Heinrich's supremely beautiful,

> Still, kein Tumult! Nicht diese grelle Lust,
> die nur betäubt, nicht weckt. . . . Feigheit
> horcht nach dem wilden Schall der schmetternden
> Trompeten. Doch wir sind nicht feig: wir sind
> Männer und Wissende allezeit.—Es ist
> ein stolzes Ding, die Lust verstehn und Herr
> der Freude sein! Des Abgrunds Tiefen ruhn
> unter des Schiffes Kiel, auf dem wir gleiten,
> und ist ein Taucher dort hinabgetaucht
> und heil zurückgekehrt zur Oberfläche,
> so ist sein Lachen, wenn er wieder lacht,
> Lasten von Golde wert.[11]

Love guides Heinrich up from the abyss and directs his ship. In

[11]"Quiet, no tumult! Not this shrill rejoicing, which dazes only and does not waken. . . . Cowardice listens for the wild noise of the blaring trumpets. But we are not cowards. We are men and initiates ever. It is a proud thing to understand what mirth is and to be master of joy. The depths of the abyss rest under the ship's keel on which we glide; and if a diver has once plunged down yonder, and returned safely to the surface, his laughter, when he laughs again, is worth tons of gold."

Der Bogen des Odysseus also, the gentler powers prevail as the native soil of Ulysses pours its strength through the shrivelled body of the returned wanderer and lifts him triumphant out of the depths of his past misfortunes. But *Der Bogen* appeared in 1914. The war and its consequences opened for Hauptmann the abyss as never before, and the dark chaos is reflected in the intensified tragedy of the three later plays. Through *Die Winterballade* of 1917 with its strange, wild passions and its death eroticism runs an echo of *Lear,*

> It is the stars,
> The stars above us, govern our condition. . . .
>
> Die Sterne sind des Bösen Ursprung, und
> wie die Planeten inklinieren, so
> vollzieht sich das Geschick. . . .
> Der Teufel selber steht am Schleifstein; wild
> fahren die bösen Sterne durch die Nacht.[12]

In *Veland,* the vision of Delphi is literally embodied, at the close of the starkest scene which Hauptmann wrote. The king, Harold, sits paralysed and the stillness of death hangs over the smith as he rises, his revenge complete, from the prostrate body of the king's daughter. The second war sent Hauptmann back to the oldest theme in European tragedy, to the story of the house of Atreus. Here, in the words of the nurse of Iphigenia, daughter of a priestess of Hecate, who suffers under the double burden of love for the family of Agamemnon and knowledge of the future, we hear, with frightening power, the despair of the eighty-two year old poet:

> Wes Seele blind ist, den besucht das Glück—
> Wes Seele auch nur blinzelt in die Welt
> besucht das Schaudern! . . .
> Was soll ich ansehn, wohin soll ich blicken,
> wo keine Schranke ist, und alles schon
> geschehn ist, was geschieht?[13]

Among non-Germanists in English-speaking countries, Hauptmann's works, and particularly his plays, are not as well known as they deserve to be, and they are less well known today than they were twenty or thirty years ago. This is in part due to the Germanists themselves, for there has not been, to my knowledge, a major account of Hauptmann's work in English since 1913. Even articles have not

[12]"The stars are the origin of evil, and our fate is fulfilled according to the inclination of the planets. . . . The devil himself stands at the whetstone; wildly the evil stars dart through the night."

[13]"Good fortune visits him whose soul is blind. But let the soul of a man just glance into the world, and horror visits him. . . . What shall I look at, whither turn my eyes, where there is no barrier, and all that is happening now has been already?"

been numerous, especially in recent years when he was neglected both abroad and at home, and they have been, in any case, usually of a special nature. Nor are the accounts of Clark and Chandler,[14] in their turn, adequate interpretations, bouncing the reader as they do through a series of short plot analyses from "naturalism" to a "fairy tale all in verse," and back again to "naturalism." The result is that Hauptmann, if he is known at all, seems usually to be considered as no more than one of the followers of Ibsen, a German counterpart of Galsworthy or Brieux, and as such of historical interest only.

This, however, is not the whole story. Hauptmann's plays, and perhaps his prose plays even more than his verse, need to be read in German, not only because of his extensive use of dialect, but because it is almost impossible to reproduce without grave distortion his fluid, idiomatic High German, to find words and expressions which give the same peculiar emotional vibrations, which have the same pitch and quality and rhythm as the original. Even the terms sometimes used by his adults to address one another, to take a very simple instance, terms such as "mein Junge," "Kinder," "lieber Sohn," are almost untranslatable, for measured against the originals "my pal" is certainly all too colloquial, "my dear friend" too artificial, "my lad" too sentimental. And such matters are not of minor but of major importance for our understanding and appreciation of Hauptmann, because it is his signal genius to have created, from the spoken language, a medium which makes the words of each of his individuals as intimate a revelation of that person's soul as is the lyric of the soul of the poet who writes it. If we compare him with others in this respect, that is, in the last analysis, in respect of characterization, we shall find that one dramatist has perhaps as subtle a touch, but works within a narrower sphere; that another depends to a greater extent than Hauptmann on the force of argument or thesis, and shapes his characters, however powerfully and convincingly, toward the demonstration of that argument; that yet others use sensational plot or situation, abstraction or allegory, or consciously and deliberately invest age-old themes in modern regalia, or call the resources of music, or of the dance, or of machinery to the aid of the spoken word; but in no case can we match Hauptmann's protean ability to project himself into a wide range of characters and make them live before us in all their shaded and complex individuality and variability. For this reason, I should say, and with no wish to detract from the devoted efforts of Mr. Lewisohn, his main translator, Haupt-

[14]F. W. Chandler, *Modern Continental Playwrights* (New York, 1931). B. H. Clark, *A History of the Modern Drama* (New York, 1947).

mann loses more in translation than any other modern dramatist.

This same ability, it would seem to me, and the resultant richness and breadth of his work, together with the modernity of his interpretation of men which parallels in so many respects that of the modern sciences, makes of him, who stands indeed as a Silesian between East and West, something very close to the central figure of the modern drama. At the same time his plays are evidence that the newer and more radical experiments in the drama, which have for some time now engaged the attention of contemporary audiences (welcome signs, as they may be, of the vitality of the theatre and of those who write for it), have not yet superseded the traditional methods of the European drama. All the brilliance of *Mourning Becomes Electra,* for example, cannot disguise the fact that our admiration for the play is always tempered with suspicion, with an uneasiness which has its final source, I think, in the inadequacy of the language; and the deficiency arises not, as Mr. Krutch suggests, because "we must pay for living in an age which is not equal to more than prose,"[15] but because O'Neill is not a great enough poet to realize his ideal in words, in dialogue. Hauptmann is. I do not suggest that he would have made a better job than O'Neill of *Electra;* he might even, if we are to judge by *Till Eulenspiegel,* have made a worse. But *Veland,* which he completed just four years before the appearence of *Electra,* belongs to our own day just as surely as O'Neill's play, though it belongs much as Shakespeare's *Caesar* or *Antony* belong to the age of Elizabeth, for Hauptmann, like Shakespeare, makes no open attempts at modernization; and his verse is deeply and powerfully moving. In this sense his methods appear to be basically those of Shakespeare and Molière. In this respect the past has united with the present in his work to make it strong and enduring, as it has united also in that other respect which has been stressed at an earlier point in this paper, namely in his insistence upon the Christian and humanist ideals of love and of respect for the individual, which are an inherent part of his nature, not, for better or worse, intellectually recovered, but deeply and ineradicably bred in him. For to him the function of art as of religion is to stress the value and to guard the dignity of man, of all men, of men as individuals. The final and broadest effect of his work must be to continue and perpetuate these values in all who will turn to him and read.

[15] *Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill* (Modern Library), xxi.

TENNYSON'S *IDYLLS*

F. E. L. Priestley

ONE of the most persistent heresies in Tennyson criticism is the belief that the *Idylls* are literature of escape. Ever since Carlyle, with his usual vigour and not unusual critical myopia, greeted the first group with remarks about "finely elaborated execution," "inward perfection of vacancy," and "the lollipops were so superlative," the myth has persisted that the poems are mere tapestry-work, "skilfully wrought of high imaginings, faery spells, fantastic legends, and mediaeval splendours . . . suffused with the Tennysonian glamour of golden mist, . . . like a chronicle illuminated by saintly hands . . ."; "a refuge from life"; "a mediaeval arras" behind which Tennyson fled from "the horrors of the Industrial Revolution."

The *Idylls* are so far from being escape that they represent one of Tennyson's most earnest and important efforts to deal with major problems of his time. Their proper significance can only be grasped by a careful reading, not of separate idylls, but of the complete group in its final form. The misunderstandings by critics have, I think, arisen largely from the reading of detached idylls, a habit encouraged by Tennyson's mode of composition and publication.

The real deficiency of the *Idylls* grows out of their piecemeal composition; quite clearly Tennyson's intention, and with it his treatment, passed through three stages, introducing inconsistencies which only complete revision and a larger measure of rewriting of the earlier idylls could have removed. Tennyson began in the eighteen-thirties with "Morte d'Arthur," which is conscientiously epic in style, and follows Malory very closely. But even at this stage he was not content merely to "remodel models," and recognized that only the finding of a modern significance in the Arthurian material would redeem his poem "from the charge of nothingness." It seems evident, however, that he could see at this time no satisfactory way of continuing the epic treatment, and his next step was to abandon the "epyllion" for the "idyll." The titles, *Enid and Nimuë: The True and the False,* of 1857, and "The True and the False: Four Idylls of the King," in the proof-sheets of 1859, suggest a development of intention. The title of 1859 gives primacy to the exemplary and didactic function of the stories, with Enid and Elaine as types of fidelity, Nimuë (Vivien) and Guinevere as types of the false and unchaste. The moral message is, however, very general, and the treatment is for the most part rather like that of the "English Idylls"; "Nimuë" in par-

ticular offers a convincing portrayal of ordinary human psychology. Critics who approach these poems as typical of the *Idylls* may perhaps be forgiven for believing that the poet is concerned chiefly with a translation of the Arthurian material into a poetical variety of realistic fiction. But the style retains reminiscences of the epic, and "Enid" and "Nimuë" often suggest symbolic overtones, especially in Earl Doorm. Tennyson's final intention appears ten years later, with the provision of the main framework of symbolic allegory in "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," and "The Passing of Arthur." "Pelleas and Ettarre" and the later poems complete the pattern, but however unified the total structure has been made thematically, the treatment remains heterogeneous. "Lancelot and Elaine" belongs quite clearly to a different *genre* from "The Holy Grail"—to the *genre* of "Enoch Arden" or "Aylmer's Field," not to that of "The Vision of Sin."

Nevertheless, the twelve poems do in fact form a pattern, and this pattern is best appreciated by interpreting the whole in terms of Tennyson's last intention, and recognizing that it is not his primary purpose to re-vivify Malory's story in a dramatic narrative, but to use the Arthurian cycle as a medium for the discussion of problems which are both contemporary and perennial. The *Idylls* are primarily allegorical, or (as Tennyson preferred to put it) parabolic. It is important to remember that the allegory is not simple. Tennyson himself, after reading reviews of the 1869 volume, complained: "They have taken my hobby, and ridden it too hard, and have explained some things too allegorically, although there is an allegorical or perhaps rather a parabolic drift in the poem. . . . I hate to be tied down to say, '*This* means *that*,' because the thought within the image is much more than any one interpretation." Professor Cleanth Brooks' comment on *The Wasteland* applies with very little modification to the *Idylls:* "The symbols resist complete equation with a simple meaning. . . . The poem would undoubtedly be 'clearer' if every symbol had one, unequivocal meaning; but the poem would be thinner, and less honest. For the poet has not been content to develop a didactic allegory in which the symbols are two-dimensional items adding up directly to the sum of the general scheme."[1] As Tennyson says elsewhere, "liberal applications lie In Art like Nature."

Tennyson himself tells us something. His earliest note identifies Arthur with religious faith, and the Round Table with liberal insti-

[1] *T. S. Eliot: A Study of His Writings by Several Hands*, ed. by B. Rajan (London, 1947), 34-5.

tutions. Much later, in conversation with Knowles, he said, "By Arthur I always meant the soul, and by the Round Table the passions and capacities of a man." Arthur's relationship to his knights is likened by Guinevere to that of the "conscience of a saint" to his "warring senses." And again, Tennyson is quoted in the *Memoir* as saying, "The whole is the dream of a man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin. Birth is a mystery and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the tableland of life, and its struggles and performances. It is not the history of one man or of one generation but of a whole cycle of generations." According to his son, Tennyson "felt strongly that only under the inspiration of ideals, and with his 'sword bathed in heaven,' can a man combat the cynical indifference, the intellectual selfishness, the sloth of will, the utilitarian materialism of a transition age. . . . If Epic unity is looked for in the Idylls, we find it . . . in the unending war of humanity in all ages—the world-wide war of sense and soul, typified in individuals. . . ."[2]

Arthur is, then, in the most general sense, soul or spirit in action. It is significant that he is constantly associated with the bringing of order out of chaos, harmony out of discord. His city is ever being built to music, "therefore never built at all, And therefore built for ever." The life of man, the life of society—each depends upon a principle of order, upon the recognition of a set of spiritual values to which all is harmonized. Arthur as soul is a symbol of these spiritual values, ideals, aspirations, and is consequently for Tennyson identified with the religious faith which must animate man, society, and nation. The Round Table is the symbol of the order, individual or social, which the values create. It is "an image of the mighty world," the cosmos created by spirit. The tragic collapse of Arthur's work in the *Idylls* is an allegory of the collapse of society, of nation, and of individual, which must follow the rejection of spiritual values.

But Tennyson is not so naïve as to think that the problem of retaining spiritual values is a simple one. From the first, we are faced with the most fundamental doubt of all: that of the validity of the values. What are the origins of our ideals? Some give to Arthur a naturalistic origin, saying that he is the son of Uther by Gorlois' wife; but Uther and Ygerve were both dark in hair and eyes, and "this king is fair Beyond the race of Britons and of men." Nevertheless many, among them Modred, deny the supernatural origin of Arthur, "some there be that hold the King a shadow, and the city

[2]H. Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (London, 1897), II, 127, 129-30.

real." Those who accept Arthur accept him in one of two ways. Bellicent, by knowing Arthur, has felt the power and attraction of his personality, and intuitively has known his kingship. (Arthur has comforted her in her sorrow; "being a child with me," as she grew greater he grew with her, was stern at times, and sad at times, "but sweet again, and then I loved him well.") Gareth, on the other hand, accepts Arthur as proved by his works: to his mother's objection that Arthur is "not wholly proven king" he replies,

> "Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
> From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
> The idolaters, and made the people free?
> Who should be king save him who makes us free?"

But the difficulty remains: the authenticity of Arthur's kingship is not established so that all *must* accept him. And even over those who acknowledge him king his power is not complete nor permanent. At the institution of the Order of the Round Table, a momentary likeness of the king flashes over the faces of the knights as they have the brief clear vision of Arthur's divine authority, but soon some are thinking of Arthur as merely human, others are recognizing his authority while they defy it, others are starting to complain that his system of vows is too strict for human nature to observe. Bound up in this fundamental problem of Arthur's authority is the whole set of fundamental problems of moral philosophy: the origin of our moral ideals, the sanctions attached to them, the nature of obligation, and so on.

Further problems are brought out by Arthur's marriage to Guinevere. Soul must act through Body; Thought must wed Fact; the Spirit must mix himself with Life; the Idea must be actualized:

> ". . . for saving I be join'd
> To her that is the fairest under heaven,
> I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
> And cannot will my will nor work my work
> Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
> Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
> Then might we live together as one life,
> And reigning with one will in everything,
> Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
> And power on this dead world to make it live."

It is only through alliance with the temporal that the eternal can work in the temporal, and since for Tennyson the prime function of an ideal is to work in the temporal, the alliance is necessary. It nevertheless brings the inevitable danger of separation and of conflict.

From the start, then, the stability of Arthur's realm, of the reign of spirit, is threatened in two ways; its collapse occurs when the challenge to Arthur's authority becomes more widespread and open, and the rebellion of the flesh within the realm becomes more violent. The defection of Guinevere is by no means the sole, or perhaps the chief, cause of the failure of Arthur's plans. It is, to be sure, important, since it tends constantly to reinforce other influences operating towards the catastrophe. But the activities of Vivien, her capture of Merlin, the revolt against the vows typified by Tristram, the effects of the Grail quest, and the stealthy work of Modred are all profoundly significant.

Vivien and Tristram are both associated with the court of Mark, a court of active and irreconcilable evil. When Mark tries to bribe his way into the Order, he has his gift burned by Arthur and his petition indignantly rejected: "More like are we to reave him of his crown Than make him knight because men call him king." Mark, inasmuch as men *do* call him king, stands for a set of values accepted by many but absolutely opposed to the Christian values Arthur stands for. Mark's values are defined by Vivien and Tristram. Vivien's whole being is dedicated to one purpose, the destruction of the Order; she has no fleshly motive for her wickedness, nor does she need any; her motive is essentially the hate felt by evil for the good.

> "As love, if love be perfect, casts out fear,
> So hate, if hate be perfect, casts out fear.
> My father died in battle against the King,
> My mother on his corpse in open field;
> . . . born from death was I
> Among the dead and sown upon the wind. . . ."

Her song, "The fire of heaven is not the flame of hell," echoes Lucretian themes of materialist naturalism, and at once recalls the similar songs in "The Vision of Sin" and "The Ancient Sage." Her values are thoroughly hedonist. "I better prize the living dog than the dead lion." "What shame in love, So love be true." Her weapons are slander and seduction. But it is to be noted that she succeeds only where some weakness already exists for her to exploit. She vanquishes Merlin only because he is already prey to "a great melancholy," a sense of "doom that poised itself to fall," a premonition of

> World-war of dying flesh against the life,
> Death in all life and lying in all love,
> The meanest having power upon the highest,
> And the high purpose broken by the worm.

He is overcome finally by weariness and Vivien's feigned repentance.

Merlin's surrender seems to signify more than the mere defeat of Reason by Passion, although this is undoubtedly in part what is meant. But Merlin, we are told, knew the range of all arts, was the king's chief builder, "was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens." His charm, the secret of his power and the preserver of his authority and indeed of his function, came to him from a seer to whom "the wall That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men Became a crystal." If Merlin represents Reason, then, it is quite clearly not Reason in its empirical or even discursive sense; he is endowed with what Tennyson would call Wisdom, rather than Knowledge; like the poet, he threads "the secretest walks of fame," and sees "thro' life and death, thro' good and ill." It is Vivien's complaint that he does not belong wholly to her; it is her boast finally that she has made Merlin's glory hers. The authority belonging properly to the intuitive reason, which is not bound to sensation and phenomena, but can penetrate to ideal reality, has been usurped by the senses. Reason has been reduced to "empirical verification," and "closed in the four walls of a hollow tower, From which was no escape for evermore." The overthrow of Merlin means the rejection of that faculty which perceives the ideal, the faculty of the poet and seer.

With his removal, the task of Vivien becomes much simpler, for Merlin has been the chief support of Arthur's system, the chief witness of Arthur's kingship. After he is gone, the reality of the ideal, the validity of Arthur's kingship, is judged by other standards. Even Guinevere can question the value of the Round Table; she resorts to the false but comforting doctrine of the fallen: "He is all fault who hath no fault at all," and glibly attributes to Arthur her own defection: "A moral child without the craft to rule, Else had he not lost me." The cause Vivien represents has won: Guinevere values imperfection and evil (since they are natural) above perfection and good; she admires craft more than virtue; and she judges worth by success in craft. These are the ethics of materialism, naturalism, utilitarianism. Once the higher ethical system is undermined, all codes go. The last virtues to be discarded are the merely barbarian "sporting" virtues; Gawain breaks an oath readily, even when sworn by the honour of the Table Round, but it still stirs him to see three attacking one. Yet even these, when become a mere code of sportsmanship not based upon any deeper ideal, are abandoned, and the last tournament is simply a struggle for prizes. The change in attitude is symbolized by the absence of Arthur as president, and by the victory of Tristram, who now replaces Vivien as a symbol of "Mark's way."

In him the naturalist philosophy of the court of Mark has become more conscious and rationalized. He repeats the doctrines of hedonism, but his motivation is different from Vivien's. He is a sceptic. Vivien has always recognized the value of what she is attacking; she knows that Arthur is right, and that her own life is wrong and evil. But Tristram is prepared to defend by argument his own rejection of the vows: "The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself— . . . ay, being snapt—We run more counter to the soul thereof Than had we never sworn." He questions the foundation of Arthur's authority, of the authority of spiritual values, by an appeal to the "natural":

> "The vows!
> O, ay—the wholesome madness of an hour—
> They served their use, their time; for every knight . . .
> Did mightier deeds than elsewise he had done,
> And so the realm was made. But then their vows . . .
> Began to gall the knighthood, asking when
> Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
> Dropt down from heaven? Wash'd up from out the deep?
> They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh and blood
> Of our old kings. Whence then? a doubtful lord
> To bind them by inviolable vows,
> Which flesh and blood perforce would violate. . . ."

The only validity Tristram grants at any time to the vows is a pragmatic one: they served their use. He challenges their permanent validity by a naturalistic argument—Arthur cannot be traced "thro' the flesh and blood Of our old kings," i.e. the spiritual values Arthur represents are not derived from the ruling elements of our physical nature. The morality Tristram seeks is one founded in those elements; he is the type of those who talk about making morality "conform to the facts of human nature." What he would advocate is an attitude which accepts the good and evil of human nature indifferently, which recognizes the naturalness of man's frailties, and which, making "naturalness" the norm, gives free play to the passions. It is worth noting that Guinevere's sin occupies a subordinate place in Tristram's argument; he attributes the downfall of the Round Table primarily to the impossible strictness of the vows.

Guinevere had at one point also drawn comfort in her error from the belief (or hope) that goodness was impossible for ordinary human nature; she had spoken scornfully of Arthur,

> "Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
> And swearing men to vows impossible,
> To make them like himself."

Even the faithful fool Dagonet is moved to cry out bitterly that Arthur is the king of fools, who

> "Conceits himself as God that he can make
> Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
> From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs,
> And men from beasts."

All of these characters give strong expression to the naturalistic argument and challenge the authority of religion and of systems of ethics from the point of view of evolutionary naturalism.

But the problem is wider; it involves the whole difficulty of the relationship of the ethical ideal to the humanly possible. And Tennyson undertakes a solution. In the first place, he argues that the vows are brought into disrepute, and indeed are made almost impossible to follow, if they are exaggerated into an excessive asceticism. Mark and Vivien recognize their first opportunity when they hear that a few of the younger knights have renounced marriage,

> So passionate for an utter purity
> Beyond the limit of their bond are these,
> For Arthur bound them not to singleness.

Sir Pellam shows another aspect of asceticism which has its dangers: he holds that heavenly things must not be defiled with earthly uses; his heir is Garlon, the poisonous vessel of scorn and slander. Some of the meaning of the Grail poem is to the same general effect; ideals are for application to life, to human nature. If they involve a turning of the back upon life, they are barren at best, destructive at worst. The strict vow is for the exceptional, for Galahads or perhaps even Percivales. But, asks Arthur,

> "What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales
> . . . but men
> With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
> To lay the sudden heads of violence flat. . . .
> Your places being vacant at my side,
> This chance of noble deeds will come and go,
> Unchallenged. . . ."

There is a special significance, perhaps, in the fact that the chance of noble deeds was not being seized *before* the Grail vision. Percivale's decision to pursue the Grail arose out of dissatisfaction with the condition of the court,

> "vainglories, rivalries,
> And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
> Among us in the jousts, while women watch
> Who wins, who falls, and waste the spiritual strength
> Within us, better offer'd up to heav'n."

The society is already pervaded with a sense of spiritual frustration; the ideal of service is already lost; the old order is already vastly changed. And the turning to the Grail quest marks for most of the knights a withdrawal from the everyday problems involved in Arthur's original purpose, to "have power on this dead world to make it live," to inform the real with the ideal. For those who find the revelation, it is well, but few find it.

The Grail poem undoubtedly expresses, as most critics recognize, Tennyson's rejection of the ascetic way of life, at least as a normal vocation. But I think there is more in it. "One has seen," says Arthur, "and all the blind will see." And when the knights return, each has seen according to his sight.

> "And out of those to whom the vision came
> My greatest hardly will believe he saw.
> Another hath beheld it afar off,
> And, leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
> Cares but to pass into the silent life."

Quite clearly, the true purposes of ordinary life are not served at all by the Grail quest. Galahad, in his success, is as much "lost to life and use" as Merlin; he has passed out on to the great Sea, beyond the limits of human life; he has been willing to lose himself to save himself. But the others, while wishing to stay in life, are seeking an easy way to spiritual certitude in the shift and clash of moral values. Without having any deep inward conviction, they insist on seeing the unseen. Arthur is content to let the visions come, and many a time they come. Not directly and deliberately seeking the vision, he sees more than most of the Grail adventurers. The restless quest for religious certainty, for most an inevitably fruitless quest, brings a paralysis of the will, as Tennyson had known as he wrote "Supposed Confessions," and "The Two Voices," and as Carlyle and Arnold had known. If man's proper task is undertaken, that of establishing the kingdom of the highest ideal on earth, then the "visions" will come as a deep and passionate conviction that all pertaining to the flesh is vision, and "God and the Spiritual the only real and true," and then will come to man the

> moments when he feels he cannot die,
> And knows himself no vision to himself,
> Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
> Who rose again.

(These lines, said Tennyson, are the central lines of the *Idylls*.) The proper way to faith is through works.

It is thoroughly consistent that those who seek to *know* Arthur's origins find no certainty. Arthur's royalty and holiness, and the holiness of the vows, are not to be empirically proved, "Thou canst not prove the Nameless"; they are either recognized immediately, or not at all. Guinevere is for long blind to them; at the end it is as if a veil has been lifted:

> "Thou art the highest and most human too,
> Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
> Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
> Now—ere he goes to the great battle? None!
> Myself must tell him in that purer life. . . .
> Ah my God,
> What might I not have made of thy fair world,
> Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
> It was my duty to have loved the highest;
> It surely was my profit had I known;
> It would have been my pleasure had I seen."

The whole problem appears in that "had I known," "had I seen." What had prevented her from knowing, and seeing?

> "False voluptuous pride, that took
> Full easily all impressions from below,
> Would not look up, or half-despised the height
> To which I would not or I could not climb."

The defect of recognition proceeds from a defect of will.

In Guinevere's repentant insight we are also given Tennyson's second answer to the naturalistic argument. The vows present the paradox: The highest is the most human too. A morality which merely conforms to our nature is based upon less than the highest possibility of our nature; we are most human when we transcend our ordinary selves. The ideal must not, like the ascetic ideal, be so remote that it seems obviously unattainable; nor must it, like the naturalistic ideal, be so close that it seems obviously attained. But it is the essence of ethics to be not descriptive, but normative; not to tell us how we behave, but how we ought to behave. The ethics of naturalism confuse the prescriptive end of ethics with the descriptive end of science.

The causes of Arthur's failure, then, are many. All round are the powers of the wasteland, powers of violence, hate, and lust. How far these and the powers of the North represent an active diabolic spirit of evil, and how far primitive atavistic forces within the individual soul and within society, does not matter—nor, I think, would Tennyson have felt it necessary to decide. Assisting them are the false philosophies represented by Mark, Vivien, and Tristram. These operate at two levels: as rationalizations in the individual, and as popular modes of thought in society. Both society and individual are secure against these powers of disintegration as long as there is a clear recognition of the spiritual values which give coherence to society and individual. This clear recognition is threatened in three ways: by doubts of the foundation and validity of the ideals; by a separation of the ideals from the actual, either in an exaggerated asceticism or in a withdrawal; and by the ignoring of the primary importance of action, and the abandonment of ethical problems in the quest for religious certainty.

The failure of Arthur's work presents the basic problem of the moral order. And here, in the last of the poems, whether deliberately or forced by the earlier pattern established in "Morte d'Arthur," Tennyson changes the relationship of the king to the theme. He is no longer so much a symbol of Soul, or of the Ideal, as of defeated mankind asking a question. The poems have hitherto displayed how evil triumphs, how "bright things come to confusion"; now Arthur asks the deeper question why.

> "I found Him in the shining of the stars,
> I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
> But in His ways with men I find Him not."

God's hand is visible in the physical order, but not in the moral; the history of the stars and of the flowers shows a pattern, but not the history of man. The problem of evil is an urgent one for Arthur. His whole work has been based upon belief in an ultimate moral order, in a system wherein good must finally prevail—and yet, as he looks back upon the history of his Round Table, he sees the Cosmos which he created out of Chaos succeeded merely by a new Chaos. And with the final doubt of the moral order, Arthur doubts himself: "I know not what I am, Nor whence I am, nor whether I be king." But as he prepares for death by the surrender of Excalibur, symbol of his kingship, the "arm, clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful," which catches the flung sword, by its very appearance and action proclaims again the reality of his kingship, and by its repetition of the beginning

affirms the pattern. What the pattern is, Arthur cannot see; but that his life began with a solemn arming and ends with a solemn disarming suggests the completion of a cycle, a cycle whose meaning may not be clear to Arthur, but is clear to those who armed him.

With the reassurance thus established, Arthur is able to affirm a faith in the order of the historical process. The flux of events is not a blind flux; the growth and decay of institutions, of societies, is not a mere mechanical sequence of phenomena. Nor does the fact of change carry implications of moral relativity. Every new order is a mode of actualization of the ideal: "God fulfils himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world." The ultimate truth is the paradox of the permanence of the ideal which underlies the transitory shifting phenomena. The history of Arthur "is not the history of one man or of one generation but of a whole cycle of generations." The war of Sense and Soul is an "unending war of humanity in all ages." The Ideal which Arthur symbolizes has found embodiment in many forms, in many ages, in many places; it has fought its battles and has, in each form, yielded place to new. It passes but never dies. As Bedivere watches the speck of Arthur's barge, it vanishes "into light, And the new sun rose bringing the new year."

Tennyson is asserting through the *Idylls* the primacy of the Unseen, the ultimate reality of the Spiritual, which is manifested in a constant succession of phenomena, and gives permanent meaning to them. The phenomena are not merely shadows or illusions; they are "real" in that they are the temporal actualization of the ideal. Man's task is not to pierce through the evil of appearances and brush it aside; it is to recognize the relationship of appearance to an ideal reality which he cannot fully know, and to work in the realm of phenomena towards more complete actualization of the ideal in so far as he knows it. And Tennyson believes that the activity of working itself brings fuller knowledge. His idealism, in short, serves to guarantee the religious and ethical values (both for the individual and for society), while not permitting a retreat into contemplative passivity; the temporal aspects of individual and social problems are the aspects under which we are bound to see, and bound to attack them. The Creed of Creeds must be worked out by human hands; the watchword is "Do Well." The task is not to be fulfilled by a denial of human nature and of human problems; asceticism is a retreat. Nor is it to be fulfilled by the search for personal intellectual certainty of the Unseen; this again is a retreat from the real duty.

Man's proper task is that of securing order and harmony in all

phases of human activity: in the individual, the harmony of senses, passions, reason, ordered by conscience; in society, harmony of individuals and of social groups in their relations to each other, ordered again by conscience operating as a sense of justice, loyalty, duty or responsibility, and love. The threats to order come from within and without. Within there are crimes of sense: lust, pride, anger, gluttony; and crimes of malice: slander, wilful breach of trust, envy of the lost good, and so on. Without there are active powers of malevolence and brutality, symbolized traditionally in the poem by the powers in the North. These have success only against those already weakened internally.

When the real nature of the *Idylls* is properly understood, it is possible to appreciate their quality, which is essentially that of dramatic allegory. The twelve poems fall naturally into three groups of four, corresponding closely to the three acts of modern drama. The first act opens with the highly symbolic "Coming of Arthur," and closes with "Geraint and Enid." Each of the four poems it includes has what can be considered a happy ending, and the general theme of all is the establishing of order and the victory of good over evil. Arthur is characterized by sharp clarity of vision; Gareth shows similar sureness and fixity of purpose. Gareth knows from the first his end in life, and recognizes easily Arthur's kingship. He finds freedom in service, and resolutely overcomes the Star Knights and the Knight of the Castle Perilous. He and Enid provide exemplars of the ideals of Arthur. Geraint and Lynette, in their perverse obstinacy and reluctant recognition of values represent internal obstacles to be overcome, rather than external forces threatening the good. But we are kept aware, during the triumphs, of the threats to Arthur's reign. The knights are few, and include slothful officers, mean-spirited knights like Sir Kay. Outside the court lie the wasteland and the dark powers of the North, violent and brutal, denying Arthur's kingship and doubting his origin. And already there is suggestion of falseness at the very heart of the realm; it is a rumour about Guinevere that leads Geraint to mistrust Enid. All these elements moderate the pattern of success and prepare for the second act.

This opens powerfully with the grim "Balin and Balan," and ends with the climax of "The Holy Grail." The forces of disruption move suddenly into sharp focus: the illicit love of Lancelot and Guinevere, formerly an uncertain and shadowy rumour, becomes a hard certainty; evil emerges, conscious, deliberate, and triumphant, in Vivien and Garlon. The fierce and tragic opening is modulated through the "Merlin and Vivien" to the pathetic involvement of the

innocent Elaine, and finally to the complex pattern of splendid holiness, shameful sin, glorious achievement, and foolish futility of "The Holy Grail." Arthur, who in the first act is shown presiding at the Hall of Justice, is left at the end of the second "gazing at a barren board, And a lean Order—scarce return'd a tithe."

The last act opens with the bitterly ironic "Pelleas and Ettarre." Pelleas is reminiscent of Gareth, particularly in his youthful eagerness and zeal, but he has none of Gareth's clarity, and his conception of knighthood is not, like Gareth's, one of religious service; it is wholly secular. His is the ideal of the courtly lover, seeking fame for a lady. He is abashed by the fleshly beauty of the harlot Ettarre, "as tho' it were the beauty of her soul." Ettarre is no Lynette or Enid; she values experienced worldliness, not young enthusiasm. And when Pelleas, betrayed by Ettarre and Gawain, goes half mad with disillusionment, it is significant that he turns against Arthur and the vows. "The Last Tournament" completes the theme of corruption by presenting the form which the spirit has left. The irony becomes deeper and all-pervading, in the title of the tournament, the prize offered, and the winner. Victory goes merely to the most experienced, who is also the most open repudiator of all that Arthur stands for. The defence of Arthur is given to Dagonet, the fool, the sad and lonely remnant of the king's following. All that remains is for the form to collapse. The last two idylls present the *dénouement,* and in the repentance of Guinevere a final statement, now tragic, of the worth of what has decayed. The choric comment by Arthur in the last poem sets the whole action in cosmic perspective, with a levelling off of emotion, and an affirmation of faith in order. The total dramatic effect seems to me to have considerable power.

That Tennyson sees a particular relevance for his own time in what he is saying is clear enough. The *Idylls* present in allegory the philosophy which pervades the whole of Tennyson's poetry, the philosophy which he felt it necessary to assert throughout his poetic lifetime. Penetrating all his poetry is the strong faith in the eternal world of spirit, expressed particularly in "The Higher Pantheism," "De Profundis," "The Ancient Sage," at the end of "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" and in "Merlin and the Gleam." The assertion of the validity and necessity of idealism is reinforced by continual warnings of the dangers of materialism: "The Vision of Sin," "Maud," "Aylmer's Field," "Despair," and "Lucretius" are the chief vehicles for these warnings. Like most sensitive thinkers of his day, Tennyson was deeply concerned with the growing materialism, with the new hedonism, with the utilitarian ethic with its relativism and naturalism,

with the attack on the religious foundation of the Christian ethic not merely by the higher critics but particularly by those who were applying evolutionary principles to show the "natural" origin of moral ideas. He was concerned with the apparent decay of ethical principles in commercial, political, and social life, and with the growing tendency to defend all sensual gratification as "natural." He saw that religious leaders were not always effective in combatting these tendencies, since they were on the defensive, and were busy trying to "demonstrate," to "prove" Christianity. The expenditure of effort against Huxley over the Gadarene swine is significant and symptomatic. The laity could hardly be blamed for thinking that Christian doctrine ought to be susceptible of the same kind of verification as scientific fact; they either wearied and perplexed themselves in the search for certainty, or sank into agnosticism. Tennyson is asserting in the *Idylls* that Christianity is not so much a set of facts to be argued about as a system of principles to be lived by; that the proof of these principles is to be established not by external empirical evidence, but by the power with which they unify and give stability and meaning to the life of man and of societies. He wants to make the reader understand how these principles become neglected, and what must happen to individuals and societies who neglect them. He is voicing a warning to his own age and nation, and to all ages and nations. He is consistently opposing a revival of the Lucretian philosophy, with its materialism, its naturalism, and its secularism. To him it is the philosophy of pessimism and despair, of defeat and social destruction.

Against the Lucretian spirit Tennyson upholds the Vergilian. The two have been well characterized by the late Professor C. N. Cochrane:

> The one holds up an ideal of repose and refined sensual enjoyment; the other, one of restless effort and activity. Lucretius urges the recognition that men are limited as the dust; that the pursuit of their aspirations is as vain and futile as are the impulses of religion, pride, ambition which ceaselessly urge them on. The purpose of Vergil is to vindicate those obscure forces within the self by which mankind is impelled to material achievement and inhibited from destroying the work of his own hands. . . . The one . . . accepts the intellectual assurance of futility, the other . . ., like all enlightened men, is beset by the problem of finding a reasonable ground for his faith.[3]

The last line of Tennyson's "Lucretius" presents acutely the implications of the Lucretian philosophy: "Thy duty? What is duty?" The man or society who can find no answer must perish.

[3] "The Latin Spirit in Literature" (*University of Toronto Quarterly*, II, 330-1).

SOREL REVISITED

JAMES H. MEISEL

THE name of Georges Sorel, whom Benedetto Croce called the only original thinker socialism has had besides Marx,[1] is fairly well established by now. The author of the *Reflections on Violence* has achieved text-book stature; even the most casual survey of representative digests in the field of political theory will bear out that assertion. But whether the understanding of Sorel's work is on a par with his still growing reputation is one question; another is whether Sorel's teaching is still alive, or merely a paragraph in a closed chapter of recent intellectual history.

It must be said at once that Sorel's influence on his contemporaries was never very great in terms of numbers. True, his followers made up for it by their devotion and intensity: Edouard Berth alone was well worth a battalion of interpreters and propagandists.[2] Yet, even granted that Sorel had a way of casting his spell over all kinds of people who never read him, and on some who, unfortunately, like the late B. Mussolini, did read and misuse him, the attempt to gauge the survival power of Sorel's ideas becomes a melancholy quest. The old guard of Sorelians has passed away; his two closest friends and collaborators, Berth and Paul Delesalle[3] died recently. Daniel Halévy, Sorel's companion in arms in the Dreyfus days and editor of his *Reflections* is one of the few main witnesses alive who remember the old sage of Boulogne-sur-Seine with tender respect. But his tenderness and his respect have the wistfulness of nostalgia for something that is irrevocably gone. Also, the venerable M. Halévy is too much a writer in his own right to be called a Sorelian. His love goes out, as did Sorel's, to their common spiritual ancestor, Proudhon, and to that remarkable neo-Catholic, Charles Péguy, but for the rest, if his kindness would permit it, he would probably range himself on the

[1]Michael Freund starts the preface of his important work on *Georges Sorel* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1932) with this statement, made by Croce in his *Pagine Sparse* (Naples, 1919), II, 227. Freund also cites Wyndham Lewis's saying that "Sorel is the key to all contemporary thought" (*The Art of being Ruled* (London, 1926), 128).

[2]Even where he does not mention or quote him, Berth always has Sorel in mind. He published Sorel's early essay, *L'Ancienne et la Nouvelle Métaphysique* under the title *D'Aristote à Marx*, with a long and enthusiastic introduction (Paris, 1935). Of his own books we mention: *Les Méfaits des Intellectuels* (Paris, 1914), with an introduction by Sorel; *Guerre des états ou guerre de classe* (Paris, 1924); *La Fin d'une culture* (Paris, 1927); *Du "Capital" aux "Réflexions sur la violence"* (Paris, 1933).

[3]Syndicalist organizer and bookdealer. Sorel's correspondence with him was published recently as *Lettres à Paul Delesalle* (Paris, 1947).

side of the critics rather than the worshippers of Sorel. There are a few younger Frenchmen who are writing books about the man they never knew personally, since he died almost thirty years ago, in 1922. Some of these people recently contributed a symposium on the occasion of Sorel's hundredth birthday.[4] How do they feel about him; how does his work appear to them?

It is no accident that the hosts of the centenary celebration, the editors of a review which "belongs neither to the left nor to the right," found it necessary to explain, if not apologize for, Georges Sorel's appearance in their columns. They did not wish it to be said that they were trying to "annex" a revolutionary writer; they refused to be accused of a camouflaged attempt at making up to Marxism. Sorel, they continued, was not a Marxist, but essentially an independent thinker: "No doubt, the author of the *Reflections* died saluting the nascent Russian revolution. What would he say about the Stalinist tyranny? No doubt, fascism for a time made claims on him. 'The dead do not protest,' as the poet said. No, Sorel cannot be labelled. . . . He was a bourgeois and created a proletarian myth. He was a socialist, but also an enemy of democracy. He sympathized with Marxism but rejected its materialism. . . . Like Proudhon, Sorel is fuzzy, disconcerting, contradictory." But also, or, rather, for that reason, "he is thought-provoking, a questioner who gives no respite. Of that we always stand in need, and now more than ever."[5]

This has been quoted, not because it presents a new view of Sorel, but precisely because it repeats so faithfully all that has been written about him for the last forty years. If it has to be said once more at this late date, it is proof that all the attempts made so far to dissociate Georges Sorel from his voluntary attachment to Marx and from his not so voluntary identification with fascism have remained unsuccessful. Of the five contributors to the symposium, four exert themselves in whitewashing the Marxist and the Leninist Sorel (they disregard the fascist). "To the extent in which Marxist philosophy and politics conflict with those of Proudhon, Sorel has never been a Marxist,"[6] says Daniel Halévy, and Pierre Andreu cites Sorel's endorsement of Benedetto Croce's view that *Das Kapital* is "a bizarre mixture of generalizations, polemics and bitter satire, of historic illustrations and digressions."[7] Sorel was not slow to discover the elements of old-fashioned idealism in Marx's materialism, Robert Aron informs us: Sorel rejected the rationalist Marx "whose

[4] In *Fédération*, Paris, November, 1947.
[5] *Ibid.*, editorial notes, pp. 1-2.
[6] *Ibid.*, 12.
[7] *Ibid.*, 5.

theory of classes he considered to be an abstraction."[8] Marxism is a bourgeois philosophy. Marx, anxious to be a "scientific socialist," neglected and Sorel added as essential prerequisites of victory a "metaphysics of mores," discovering as Halévy puts it,[9] "the epic element" of the class struggle, its "sublime" quality.[10] Sorel takes to heart Emil Vandervelde's declaration: "If the workers should triumph without having accomplished the equally indispensable moral evolution, their reign would be abominable and the world would again be a place of suffering, brutality and injustice as bad as now."[11]

All this will say that Sorel was not a Marxist. The apologists are right: Sorel was only temporarily under the spell of Karl Marx, and even then he was a Marxist very much *à la Sorel* who used historic materialism as a "laboratory" for his independent experiments and was, long before the Russian revolution, "unmasked" and excommunicated by Lenin[12] since he dared to take issue not only with the Marxist pundits but even with the founding fathers themselves, although he centred his attacks on Friedrich Engels rather than on Marx.

Still, the marked tendency of these writers to establish Sorel's autonomy as a social thinker who transcended Marx is significant beyond the question of accurate interpretation. It indicates an anxiety to salvage from the heritage of socialism that which, these writers hope,[13] is still alive: that which has not been and could not be assimilated by those who claim today to be the true and only heirs of the new dispensation. Thus understood, all recent vindication of Sorel has for its objective the reclamation for the West of its lawful intellectual property, the reassertion of a libertarian tradition that has been discarded by the masters of the East and is severely threat-

[8] *Ibid.*, 15.

[9] *Ibid.*, 13.

[10] *Ibid.*, 2. Here, in the first of two contributions, Halévy quotes Arnaud Dandieu (from *Anthologie des philosophes contemporains*, Paris, 1931), who holds that Sorel's "heroic syndicalism is the only political doctrine entitled to the claim of representing a position beyond Marxism." Andreu likewise stresses Sorel's emphasis on the "sublime" and "heroic" qualities of the proletarian struggle (p. 5).

[11] Robert Aron in *Fédération*, 16.

[12] In his *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, Lenin links Sorel with the French mathematician and philosopher, Jules Henri Poincaré, exclaiming: "There are people who can give thought to absurdity. To that class belongs the notorious muddlehead, Georges Sorel." (*Collected Works*, London, Martin Laurence, 1927, XIII, 249).

[13] To this group also belong: Pierre Angel, *Essais sur Georges Sorel* (Paris, 1936); Jacques Rennes, *Georges Sorel et le syndicalisme révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1936); S. Beracha, *Le Marxisme après Marx* (Paris, 1937); Jean Deroo, *Le Renversement du matérialisme historique: L'expérience de Georges Sorel* (Paris, 1939).

ened in the rest of Europe. This tradition is threatened by Stalinist penetration, but endangered likewise by developments within Western society itself.

The vindication of Sorel thus broadens into a defence of freedom in the Western sense, provided two things can be shown conclusively: first, that the Sorel approach means freedom not merely for the one class with which his work is in the main concerned, the proletariat, but freedom for all classes, in distinction to the Marxian approach which likewise aims at freedom for all, but on the condition that there be no classes left; and, secondly, that a trend favouring Sorel's expectations over those of Marx can be shown actually to exist in contemporary Europe.

This is a difficult task, and one in which we shall get little help from Sorel himself because he does his worst to revile democracy. Will the Sorelians prove to be more helpful?

II

One way to re-establish Sorel as a defender of liberty is to show that his affiliation with Marxism was only part, and not the essence of his work, that he was a moralist first, and a revolutionary only because he was basically a conservative,[14] passionately concerned about the growing symptoms of decadence which bourgeois Europe displayed in his time. His "infatuation" with the proletariat, his conviction that it was the class of the "elect," the chosen instrument of history to save civilization, was due (we must argue) not to any dislike on the part of Sorel for bourgeois values. On the contrary, *because* Sorel closely identified all social virtues with the bourgeois virtues of the past, because in his opinion the working class was the only group left in which those "heroisms" which made for greatness were left fairly intact, he elevated the proletariat to the rank of the new aristocracy destined to preserve bourgeois austerity and thrift. While the son of the bourgeoisie, Karl Marx, considered middle-class morality to be expressive of a transitory phase of the industrial revolution, bound to be superseded by a new morality to be created by the proletariat, but not proletarian either since the proletariat would abolish itself in the process, Sorel insisted on proletarian morality as developing under capitalism to be the morality of the future precisely because it was capitalist morality at its best. In contrast to Marx, who believed that the ruling class of his time was

[14]The sub-title of Michael Freund's study of Sorel (see note 1) reads *Der revolutionaere Konservativismus* (Revolutionary Conservativism).

doomed together with the capitalist "mode of production," Sorel was satisfied with a blood transfusion which would merely replace the tired old personnel with a new set of "producers." The question of ownership, of private or group enterprise, was secondary for Sorel as long as the vigour, the drive, of industrial civilization was maintained and increased.[15]

In this light, Sorel's insistence on the need for sharpening the intensity of the class struggle assumes a significance radically different from the Marxist interpretation of that social fact. Marx sees the class struggle as a passing phase, to be resolved in the "higher phase" of socialist, classless society. Sorel, while holding out the hope, like Marx, for a future society of "free producers," is not concerned with the future; the class struggle is, to him, a means not toward the abolition of both capitalist and proletarian social forms and consciousnesses, but the guarantee that both classes will be forced to maintain themselves as they are in top form. Sorel's belief that the proletariat would prove to be more successful in preserving the "morality of the producer" was not always secure from doubt; personally he did not cherish the idea that the middle class would reassert itself because he thought it was past redemption, but he did not exclude the possibility of a bourgeois renaissance.

It was against the threat of bourgeois *decadence* that Sorel developed the theory which made him famous and infamous: his concept of proletarian "violence." The defensive character of that notion has been curiously neglected by most critics of Sorel. He looked upon violence as the only means that would protect the proletariat from losing its identity as a distinct class. The labour movement had, for Sorel, a sole objective: to remain, or, rather, to become itself. It was, therefore, to scorn all help both from political parties and from the state; least of all was it to become the state. The aggressor was neither the proletariat nor, as Marx saw it, a capitalism torn and driven on by its "inherent contradictions." For Sorel, capitalism (as far as it meant production) and the proletariat were the twin victims of non-productive interests, of parasitic politics sapping the productive energies by arbitrary economic intervention.[16] Because democracy tended to assuage the class struggle, because it

[15]"Not a single line against capitalism as a régime of production will be found in his works." Pierre Andreu in *Fédération*, 6.

[16]Cf. Freund, *Georges Sorel:* "The two opponents of economic liberalism, protectionism and social legislation, are also Sorel's enemies" (p. 142) and: "Sorel's work is perhaps the most passionate protest of our time against the return of the Welfare State" (p. 143).

"corrupted" the entrepreneurs as well as their workers into mutual appeasement, it became Sorel's arch villain. Paradoxical as it may sound, he was for *laissez-faire,* and hostile to social legislation because of his proletarian bias.[17]

If these conclusions seem to be arrived at by a rather tortuous road, this is so mainly because Sorel's view of democracy as a unitary, class-levelling influence will impress many as a faulty interpretation, not of its ultimate objective which *is* social co-operation, but of its working method. It may easily be argued that the democratic *process* amounts to an emphatic affirmation of the idea which presupposes discrepancy instead of identity of interests, that in fact democracy requires the very clash of discordant social wills to achieve the balance of power that will ensure harmony, be it ever so precarious.

In this view, the democratic mechanism becomes a transmission belt, driven by the forces engendered by the class struggle, with its conflicting claims being passed on, assembly-line fashion, to emerge as the collective product called the democratic compromise. In so far as the democracies of the West have shown a tendency toward slowing down or even arresting the movement of the transmission belt, in so far as they have become afraid of legalizing the social advances of the working class, Sorel's attack against "democracy" seems consistent with a progressive attitude not necessarily Marxist. However, if we are justified in hoping that democracy has not yet become static, then Sorel's quarrel with it would appear to be incidental rather than basic, a critique of "too little," not of the democratic principle itself. He would have made it easier for us to understand him, if he had annexed the semantics of democracy, as Marx and the Marxists did, instead of exorcizing it.

He could have done so with more right than they and still remained sincere. But precisely because he was sincere, he would not tolerate any confusion between the corrupt democracy of the French politician and his own libertarian beliefs. He would rather be known and reviled as the sinister plotter against law-abiding society than use the terminology of the only system in which his particular type of class struggle was feasible, a system in which both capitalists and proletarians would work out their own destinies separately and thereby fulfil their historic mission, to develop all the forces of industrial production to the limit.

[17] "All social legislation is nothing but an element of proletarian decadence." (Sorel, *Insegnamenti sociali della economia contemporanea,* Palermo, 1907.) In the same work, Sorel rejects the eight-hour working day (p. 278, note).

In comparison with Marx's grandiose scheme in which the proletariat figures as the agent but not at all as the primary concern of history, Sorel's preoccupation with the labour movement and its autonomy looks almost petty. If the choice has to be between him and Marx, it is the latter who seems to promise more by focusing on the whole of social evolution and not merely on one class, as Sorel appears to do. This is a second major obstacle that has to be overcome by those who would like to believe that Georges Sorel is a much better guide to freedom than Karl Marx and his disciples.

III

The decisive word in Sorel's vocabulary is *"scission,"* schism, severance. The class struggle (in the Marxian scheme of things the phase of "prehistory" after which the proletariat, having abolished itself together with capitalism, will begin to build the new, post-capitalist and post-proletarian society) already contains for Sorel the final answer: it brings into being, while it is going on, and only as long as it is going on, the new institutions which are the new society. The Marxian proletariat, as proletariat, is nothing but one component of a preliminary process; it poses the question which history will answer. Sorel's proletariat is everything: it is the answer. Marx's working class is the negation of the old; it is not yet the new, but it will merge into a socialist society. Sorel's proletarian is the new man himself. He is to create and to bring into existence in the time of capitalism the society of the producers, not by destroying capitalism but by hollowing it out, not by "taking it over" but, as it were, in hostile symbiosis. Sorel's class struggle is combat, to be sure; but beyond and above that it is a withdrawal, a secession within the framework of capitalism, just as the early Christian Church practised secession from the Roman world while growing up in it.

One sees now how radical a transformation the concept of the class struggle has undergone with Sorel. One also sees why he deliberately chose as the cadre of the new society the narrow framework of one class, unlike Marx, who worked on the broadest canvas, drawing into his design the indissoluble web of all the "productive forces." His classes were to merge into society by way of a transitory, proletarian state; in the Sorelian view, all elements of the future world are already present in the proletarian class as it exists and realizes itself under the capitalist régime. But before the general may emerge out of the particular, the small group, conscious of its wider task, must assume the Archimedean position: the proletarian minority

must constitute itself as a society within society; and it cannot do so unless it has established its own autonomy, spiritual as well as institutional.

At this point, the question poses itself irrepressibly: But why the proletariat? Marx nowhere idolized the proletariat qua proletariat; he saw in it only one of the two prongs of the dialectic pliers. We may discover within the iron mechanism of the Marxian "science" the motor of human passion. Marx, no doubt, felt for the proletariat which he met but little. But if he became its leader it was because he believed there should not and there would not be a proletariat in the "realm of freedom." Sorel, the engineer, stressing the technological rather than the economic role of the working class, believed, on the contrary, the typical characteristics of the proletarian to be the essence that must be preserved by the heroic effort of the working class. And he felt that way not because he was infatuated with some imaginary "sublime proletarian" but because he was under the influence of a new social fact. An emerging society could be studied prior to its coming into existence: its chart could be read by the student of historic evolution. This society would reveal its nature in its institutions. Now, the institution of the new class, the proletariat, that was coming into its own in Sorel's time was the professional association of the workers. It was in their syndicates, their trade unions, that he thought that he discovered the unique organizational principle of his new society. The syndicalist rebellion against the dominance of political parties, including the parties that professed to represent the labour interest, was for Sorel an exciting experience which he translated into the Sorelian theory of revolutionary syndicalism. To quote once more the contributors to the symposium, according to Sorel "the society of the future will grow quite naturally out of the practices of the labour movement. To the degree in which it will be heroic and pure, the society to which it gives birth will attain a more elevated level. Proletarian Right is not the one which the bourgeois legislators, those dilettantes of the social science, are fabricating in their parliament—it is the Right which is being created by syndicalist practice."[18] For, adds Daniel Halévy, "the syndicalist militant, according to Sorel, is a creator of values."[19]

The syndicate, therefore, cannot be merely an agency of economic betterment. Sorel cannot accept Lenin's view that the labour movement, if left to its own devices and lacking proper guidance

[18]Pierre Andreu in *Fédération,* 6-7.
[19]In *Fédération,* 13.

by a political party, would never attain anything more than trade-union consciousness. For Sorel, the labour union is a moral agency: the intellectual home for the proletariat, its school and church. These new social forms will arise not because the proletarian is endowed with some superior virtue, but out of necessity. They will be wrought by the pressure and counter-pressure of the class struggle. Each proletarian advance will, at the same time, enlarge the sphere of proletarian Right.[20] Socialism will be the sum of the legally recognized institutions of the working class.

IV

The syndicalist movement inspired Sorel to write his *Reflections on Violence*. Has this book in turn been an inspiration to the movement? The general agreement seems to be that it did not exert any practical influence worth speaking of. Yet, even if the work has never been a guide to action, at least not in France,[21] it might still have significance as a correct analysis of syndicalist performance in the past and of its promise for the future. But even this merit of the *Reflections* has been denied by some. Gaétan Pirou, for instance, author of extremely valuable studies of syndicalism, sees "an abyss" between the fighters and the theorist: "While Sorel was concerned with moral culture, the militants were after tangible, material results." They were optimists, envisioning a society of plenty, leisure, and easy morals. Sorel, insists Pirou, was on the contrary a pessimist and a man of austere standards who believed that the society of producers would entail much harder work and, above all, much better morals. He had the traditionally stern notions of the middle-class Frenchman concerning family life and chastity. For these reasons, if there was any agreement of opinion between the syndicalists and Sorel, it was confined to tactics.[22]

Against this negative view, a recent student of syndicalism, who cannot be called a Sorelian, maintains that Sorel's theory accurately

[20]Sorel makes a sharp distinction between the struggle for power and the struggle for law; history marks "the passage from a system of obligations to a system of rights" (*Les Illusions du progrès*, 4th ed., Paris, 1927, 316). "The people rebel against duties and insist on obtaining a régime based on Rights. It is proletarian violence alone which makes possible the [successful] development of such revolt. . . ." From his study of Roman institutions, Sorel draws the conclusion that "the more profound the schism between the subjects of the law, the more perfect it is held to be" (*ibid.*, 317).

[21]In contrast to Italy where Sorel enjoyed considerable authority among socialists and syndicalists. Several of his books were published in the Italian language and never printed in French.

[22]Gaétan Pirou, *Georges Sorel* (Paris, 1927), 37-8.

reflects an important part at any rate of the syndicalist phenomenon, even if not of its entirety. Robert Goetz-Girey[23] distinguishes three stages of the movement, lasting from the end of the nineteenth century to the Second World War, each characterized by a radically different view of the proper attitude toward the parties and the state. In the first period the slogan was "Autonomy and Reform." The syndicate was to strive for piecemeal social advancement. The leaders of the movement felt confident that they could deal successfully with the representatives of capital even while relying exclusively on syndicalist strength; they emphatically rejected all government protection as well as the friendly guidance of political socialism.

Very soon this gradualism yielded to revolutionary tendencies, and in the end the trade unions accepted the leadership of the socialist (and communist) parties to the extent that the alignment of forces could be expressed by the three words: "Subordination and Revolution."

However, between the first and the third phase a remarkable attempt was made to combine the idea of syndicalist rebellion with the principle of syndicalist independence: "Autonomy and Revolution." It is this middle span which corresponds, in Goetz-Girey's opinion, to Sorel's and his "New School's" Revolutionary Syndicalism, to "Syndicalist Imperialism,"[24] or "Autarchic Imperialism." Between the beginning which saw syndicalist freedom hampered by the ineffectual precept of reformism, and the end when the revolution against capitalism was to be had only at the price of submission to the politicians, between these two horns of the dilemma, syndicalism for a short while, in the first decade of this century, tried to solve its problem. This was the time when "the theoreticians superimposed their systems on the conceptions of the militants: hence the two syndicalisms, theoretical and militant, acted and reacted upon one another."[25]

The honeymoon was short, perhaps because only a catastrophe of at least national dimensions will kindle in the mind of men the moral ardour which was the precondition for Sorel's "labour imperialism" (a not very happy formula because Sorel's proletarian philosophy was one of retrenchment rather than of conquest). When the workers failed to live up to his moral expectations, he broke off all relations with the syndicalist militants in 1908, the very year in which his

[23] In *La Pensée syndicale française: Militants et théoriciens* (Paris, 1948), 22 ff.

[24] *Théoricien de l'impérialisme* is the sub-title of Pierre Lasserre's *Georges Sorel* (Paris, 1928), a work severely critical of our author.

[25] Goetz-Girey, *La Pensée syndicale française*, 22.

Reflections appeared in book form. "I am too old," Sorel confessed,[26] "to wait for distant hopes to come true, and I have decided to use the few years I have left to look more closely into other questions—questions in which the French youth takes a lively interest." This is a reference to Charles Maurras' nationalist movement which was eager to win over the syndicalist left, in anticipation of Mussolini's "*idée maîtresse.*" Sorel's temporary flirt with the *Action Française* is an episode that causes his admirers much embarrassment, and Sorel himself felt the need to do some explaining. His socialist studies, he insisted, did not constitute the most important part of his life work.[27] He spoke the truth: the bulk of his writing deals with religion, ethics, philosophy, and history. Yet the note of asperity in these explanations is unmistakable: Georges Sorel did not feel happy in his new role as the darling of the *Camelots du Roi.*

When the war came, he took another look at the world and renewed his proletarian allegiance. But not even the global disaster of those four years stirred French syndicalism into new, independent action. In despair, Sorel cried out that the whole world was rotten. One man alone showed courage, a true syndicalist whether he knew it or not: Lenin, the destroyer of a state which he tried to supplant by a society of self-ruling producers. But he was far away, and the West was ganging up on him; his defeat would be dearly paid for, Sorel believed, by the French proletariat that did nothing to assist him. Daniel Halévy tries to prove that Sorel, a lover of lost causes, made his famous plea, *For Lenin*, merely because he was convinced that bolshevism could not last: ". . . he sees in them the brothers of the Paris Communards of 1871, like them marked for slaughter. . . . Sorel defended a people in revolt, destined to perish in massacre and famine. . . . Sorel is always pleading for the vanquished."[28]

This attempt to detach Sorel from Lenin tells us more about the spirit of the West in 1947 than about Sorel's view of the revolution that took place in 1917. Halévy's evidence is unimpeachable, but it obscures the real tragedy that may be called Sorel's last hope. By an effort that ought not to be denied its grandeur, the old, lonely

[26]In "Le Confessioni: Come divenni sindicalista" ("The Confessions: I became Syndicalist"), first published in *Divenire sociale*, Rome, March 1 to May 16, 1910. Reprinted in French, without the introduction, from which the passage in the text is quoted, in Sorel's *Matériaux d'une théorie du prolétariat* (1st ed., Paris, 1919), under the title, "Mes raisons du syndicalisme." The omission in the later work is easy to understand: Sorel had, in the meantime, renewed his allegiance to the cause of labour.

[27]In a letter to his Italian translator Agostino Lanzillo, published by the *Giornale d'Italia* in its issue of November 20, 1910.

[28]In *Fédération*, 4.

man forced himself to believe that in Lenin his man, the liberator, had at last arrived. What Sorel had dreamed was no illusion after all: the proletariat was capable of building its own world, the new stateless society.

We of today can recognize the element of irony in Sorel's tragedy: his failure to understand the real significance of the Russian event. For, far from being the beginning of Sorel's autonomous community of free producers, the bolshevist success signalled the end of syndicalism, not in Russia only but everywhere: it meant the triumph of state and party over class, Sorel's independent proletariat.

For a brief moment Georges Sorel seems to have shown to the Left a way out of their predicament: it looked as if he had "reconciled the libertarian tradition of the French, and of Proudhon in particular, with the German school of dialectics."[29] Alas, "a revolutionary effort of this kind cannot retain its vigour forever; there always arrives a time when new routines, new automatisms, sterilize and pervert the forces of renewal."[30] Syndicalism, in which Sorel had seen the wholesome reaction against the gratuitous game of the politicians with their amoralism and penchant for dictatorship, "has once more surrendered to the same old politicians" who, however, have been adding something new to their arsenal of tricks, "the ideas and techniques of the total state."[31] Eloquent words, but they do not tell the full story.

The story may be put into a single sentence: Time has run out on Sorel's proletarian, heroism or no heroism. All his syndicalist hopes were based on the expectation that capitalism was to stay for a long time to come. Impatient as he was with its shortcomings, decrying the vices of the time, always trying to discover the signs of the impending catastrophe, Sorel did not really wish the end to come. The proletariat needed time to build its own society, advancing step by step into its proletarian world. While the Marxist believed a revolution would "shorten and lessen the birthpangs of socialist society," Sorel's syndicalist was, by his revolutionary violence, to ensure the conservation, not the breakdown of capitalist forms. The proletarian quarrel was with the capitalist class, to be sure; but the survival of that class was needed if the proletarian was to remain a proletarian.

[29]Robert Aron in *Fédération*, 16. According to J. de Saint-Chamant ("L'actualité de Georges Sorel" in *La Grande Revue*, Paris, January, 1938) a Sorel renaissance occurred in Spain where, during the last civil war, "the Anarcho-Syndicalists . . . borrowed more than one idea from the theoretician of the revolutionary myth and the proletarian élite."

[30]Robert Aron in *Fédération*, 16.

[31]*Ibid.*

The quarrel was in the main between workers and owners; the state was considered as a secondary enemy, in so far as it identified itself with the propertied class. Otherwise, the state was relegated to the role of giving its jurisdictional sanction to the slowly emerging forms of the proletarian community. The syndicalist did not much fear the enmity of the state; he did not suspect that the state might become a friend.

But, unfortunately for Sorel's scheme, the transformation of European capitalism from a system directed by capitalists, to a system of state control or even state ownership happened much too fast even in Sorel's own industrially trailing country. It happened too early for the French labour movement to develop its full strength. Trade unionism had barely hit its stride in the nineteen-thirties when Léon Blum's "French New Deal" confronted it with an entirely altered situation. The strengthening of organized labour coincided with the enormous strengthening of state power. French *dirigisme,* Government in Business, seemed to refute the "Sorelian" element within labour. Although Léon Blum had only proposed "to administer capitalism," yet in France no less than in the Russian "Workers' State," a continuation of the class struggle along traditional lines was made difficult, if not impossible. For it was the state through which the labour unions had secured their strong position.

But the whole severity of the syndicalist, Sorelian predicament did not become fully evident until the liberation. The planned economy of the Fourth Republic, as far as it goes, is controlled not primarily by organized labour but by political parties representing the economic groups. What influence over the management of production the syndicates attained through legislation was bought at the expense of syndicalist autonomy: the organs of the workers became state agencies. But the French state in turn—what is it but the battlefield on which massive political machines contend for patronage? It is they who secure to the French masses of all social strata their meagre share of the national income. The political organization has triumphed; between state impotence and party mechanism, the classes, bourgeoisie or proletarians, are condemned to impotence. Even though at present Lenin's party is in the opposition, the grand debate between Sorel and Lenin has been, for the time being, decided in favour of the Russian. "As a system, revolutionary syndicalism is finished, even though, after the master's death, one or another of his disciples continue to profess in moving words, their faith and loyalty."[32]

[32]Goetz-Girey, *La Pensée syndicale française,* 157.

But the funeral oration may be premature. French *dirigisme* is, at this writing, far from secure against a relapse into what may become not a reversal to the capitalism of the Third Republic but a state of fluidity in which all kinds of social forces, and not last the labour movement, may regain their freedom of action. The symptoms pointing in that direction do not yet constitute what one could call a distinct current, but neither are they to be denied altogether. The great revulsion against party rule is growing;[33] it may well issue in a general flight away from "politics" into the a-political world of professional organization. "If even today socialism has still some chance to escape dictatorship, it is because a path out of the totalitarian impasse reached by Marxism has been traced by Georges Sorel."[34]

Eloquent words, again, and tomorrow they may prove to be not quite as fanciful as they sound to us today.

[33]The withdrawal of the socialist unions from the communist-controlled C.G.T. *may* be an indication that the idea of syndicalist autonomy is reviving.
[34]Robert Aron in *Fédération,* 16.

PATMORE'S THEORY AND HOPKINS' PRACTICE

MARGARET R. STOBIE

IT is remarkable that often the near past is the most obscure period of history. This hooded quality of the proximate is exemplified in the fate of the prosody of Hopkins. Bridges, publishing Hopkins' poems thirty years after his death, comments: "It was an idiosyncrasy of this student's mind to push everything to its logical extreme, and take pleasure in a paradoxical result; as may be seen in his prosody where a simple theory seems to be used only as a basis for unexampled liberty." Taken up with later theories which were engaging the interests of poets in 1918, Bridges did not bother to mention what the "simple theory" was, although by his tone he must have been familiar with it. It was left for Mr. Harold Whitehall, in 1944, to discover that this theory was the so-called dipodic theory which had first been announced by Patmore. Mr. Whitehall says:

> Hopkins' sprung rhythm, and for that matter most of his running rhythm, follows Patmore's theories almost to the letter. Yet Patmore and Hopkins never saw how they complemented each other. Although Hopkins had undoubtedly read the Patmore essay by 1881 . . . he was too limited by conventional metrical theory and by concessions to stanzaic form to realize its bearing on the explanation of his own work. Patmore, for his part, . . . was puzzled by the appearance of the poems in Hopkins' manuscript . . . and was misled by the abrupt juxtaposition of stresses which is Hopkins' chief metrical innovation. If accidents of time and friendship had permitted an early meeting between the two men—the virtuosic dipodic practitioner and our first dipodic theorist—Hopkins' poems might have yielded their metrical secrets in his own lifetime.[1]

The close relationship between the metrical theories of Patmore and of Hopkins, which Mr. Whitehall notes here, is indeed so remarkable that it is almost incredible that Hopkins was not familiar with Patmore's "Essay on English Metrical Law" until so late a date. Such ignorance of it is the more unlikely in view of the great contemporary interest which the essay aroused. It was first published in 1856, and in a note to the 1886 reprinting of it Patmore comments upon its intervening popularity and influence: "I have seen with pleasure that, since then, its main principles have been quietly adopted by most writers on the subject in periodicals and elsewhere."

[1] *Gerard Manley Hopkins: By the Kenyon Critics* (Norfolk, Conn., New Directions Books, 1945), 37.

Nor is Patmore flattering himself, for poets and prosodians alike, apart from their interest in the dipodic theory as such, found in the essay the first intelligent attempt to solve a problem which interested them all—how to include within the principles of English versification the peculiarities of the newly recovered body of Old English poetry. In particular, Patmore's theory was of great interest to the Oxford set with whom he was on familiar terms when the essay was first published and which included not only Burne-Jones and William Morris, but also R. W. Dixon, who took his degree in that year and who was shortly to become Hopkins' schoolmaster. So, even if it could be demonstrably proved that Hopkins did not read the essay until about 1880, it would still be most unlikely that he should not be familiar with its theories, which were a topic of general discussion. It would seem, on the contrary, to be strongly probable that Hopkins became acquainted with the theory either through Dixon, or before he left Oxford in 1867, eleven years after the essay was published, or during his seven years of poetic silence. Such a conjecture gains some measure of support from Bridges' comment, in which he suggests Hopkins' early familiarity with the "simple theory," and from Hopkins' note on "The Wreck of the Deutschland": "I had long had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm which now I realised on paper. . . . I do not say the idea is altogether new . . . but no one has professedly used it and made it the principle throughout, that I know of."[2]

Certainly, the "Author's Preface" which Hopkins wrote in 1883 sounds like a summary of Patmore, in its remarks on common English rhythm, on rising and falling stress, on reversed or counterpointed feet, on run-on scansion, on anacrusis, metrical pauses, and so forth. On the other hand, Hopkins makes some important corrections and additions to Patmore's theory, both in the Preface and in the body of his poems, which subsequent dipodists either have not understood or have ignored. These corrections in themselves are valuable enough to merit a re-examination of Patmore, but in turn they throw some light on those problems which Mr. Whitehall, in his excellent article, feels are still obscure. The most important of these problems concern the meaning of Hopkins' term "sprung" rhythm, his manipulating of secondary stress, and his preoccupation with stanza forms.

[2]*Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Robert Bridges (2nd ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1930), 102.

II

The terms of the "law" which Patmore abruptly announces are as interesting for their arbitrariness as they are for their implications. They are important enough to quote at some length:

> Nothing but the unaccountable disregard, by prosodians, of final pauses could have prevented the observation of the great general law, which I believe that I am now, for the first time, stating, that *the elementary measure, or integer, of English verse is double the measure of ordinary prose,*—that is to say, it is the space which is bounded by *alternate* accents; *that every verse proper contains two, three or four of these 'metres,'* or, as with a little allowance they may be called, 'dipodes'; *and that there is properly no such thing as hypercatalexis.* All English verses in common cadence are therefore dimeters, trimeters, or tetrameters, and consist, when they are *full,* i.e., without *catalexis,* of eight, twelve, or sixteen syllables. Verses in triple cadence obey the same law, only their length never . . . exceeds that of the trimeter, on account of the great number of syllables or places of syllables (twenty-four) which would be involved in a tetrameter in such cadence. Monometers cannot stand in series as verses though . . . the effect of their introduction is often admirable.[3]

In the first italicized section of this law, there are two arbitrary assumptions. The first is that the normal measure of prose is of either two or three syllables: that is, prose measures conform to the descriptive terms of iambic, trochaic, anapaestic, or dactylic feet. Patmore gives no reason for this assumption, and indeed, as we shall see from his own prose, it is unsupportable. The second, equally arbitrary assumption is that poetic measure is twice that of prose. It contains *two* iambic, trochaic, etc. feet, and may therefore be described as dipodic.

The first deduction based on these assumptions is in the second italicized section, "that every verse proper contains two, three, or four of these 'metres'." This deduction is not more reliable than its bases, but it is important to Patmore's system of scansion. If a verse is not full, it is completed of necessity in one of several ways. Either the time of the missing syllables is made up by a pause at the end of the line as in these dipodic dimeters:

> One road leads to Lóndon, (pause of two syllables)
> One road leads to Wáles; (pause of three syllables)

[3]Coventry Patmore, *Poems* (London, 1890), II, 242. All italics in passages quoted from Patmore are his own.

or the measure is completed in the unemphatic syllables at the beginning of the next line:

> Mérrily did we dróp
> Below the kírk, below the híll,
> Below the líght-house tóp;

or individual syllables within the line may be so weighted as to receive the time of two or more syllables, as in the line

> Cóme, sée rúral felícity,

which Patmore quotes to point out that each of the first two syllables is equal to either of the following triplets. The lines must be filled of necessity because of the important condition inherent in metre that the measures are isochronous. Patmore gives the credit to Joshua Steele for first having discovered the "isochronous division by accents," but he dwells on the principle at length and emphasizes "the approximate equality of time between accent and accent, which, I cannot too often repeat, is the primary condition of metre in all languages."[4]

Having established his law and its conditions, Patmore goes on to discuss the nature of the two "prose" feet within the dipodic measure. He points out that it is not necessary for both to be of the same kind: frequently a measure will be mixed, containing one trochaic and one dactylic foot, to avoid the monotony of a series of identical feet. But more important, these two feet have a certain stress relationship with each other. The following lines are his illustrative quotation and his comment upon it:

> The crów doth sing as swéetly as the lárk
> When néither is atténded; and I thínk
> The níghtingale, if shé should sing by dáy
> When évery goose is cáckling, would be thóught
> No bétter a musícian than the wrén.

In these blank trimeters, properly read, there is a major and a minor accent in every section but one.[5]

[4] *Ibid.*, II, 249. Mr. Whitehall makes the curious statement: "Hopkins had stumbled upon a basic but hitherto unrecognized principle of rhythm—English or foreign, classical or modern. Consciously or unconsciously, he had come to realize that a metrical foot represents a unit in a series of even-time (isochronous) units and that . . . their time-lapses may be occupied by anything from a single heavy-stressed syllable to four or five syllables." (*Hopkins: By the Kenyon Critics*, 36.)

[5] Patmore, *Poems*, II, 245.

In other words, normally, although not always, there will be a secondary accent within the measure, and that secondary accent will, of course, fall on the important syllable of the second "prose" foot.

This sentence of Patmore's comment, however, bears further examination. Beginning, like the verse quoted above, with a syllable of anacrusis, the measures here show an interesting pattern: "In) thése blank trîmeters, próperly réad, there is a májor and a mínor áccent in évery section but óne." At first glance, one discovers that three of these measures are identical with Patmore's description of "dipodic" rhythm, and on second glance one sees that three more follow the same pattern by virtue of the natural pauses—after "trimeter," "accent," and "one"—which come in the reading. What Patmore discovered in the lines from *The Merchant of Venice* is a unit of rhythm, true enough, but a unit of prose rhythm which his own comment underlines and emphasizes. The measures of his own prose refute the first assumption of his "law" (that the unit of prose rhythm is two or three syllables), and demolish the second (that the unit of poetry is twice that of prose).

This is the important error in the logic of Patmore's theory which Hopkins perceived and corrected. That Hopkins recognized the true nature of Patmore's measure is evident when he says it "is the most natural of things. For . . . it is the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when rhythm is perceived in them."[6] Since this measure is, then, *not* composed of two prose units, the term "dipodic" which Patmore uses in false. This is a rhythmical foot having its own integrity apparent in its individual characteristics of primary and secondary stress; it cannot be described by such terms as iambic and so forth; and most important, it cannot be contained within such measures. Patmore, in discussing the isochronous nature of metre, likens the strong accent to "a post in a chain railing [which] shall mark the end of one space, and the commencement of another." Within the space of the metrical chain railing, then, the secondary accent marks something less than the whole measure, and is of a weaker nature than the post. In a sense, it is a post knocked askew, so that the rhythm measure bounds over it to the next upright post. To indicate this individual characteristic of the new measure, Hopkins uses the peculiarly vivid and descriptive term, *sprung* rhythm. If he had expanded his comment in the Preface, he might have noted that this is also the rhythm which the ear imposes upon recurrent noises. For instance, it is the rhythm by which we interpret the sound

[6]Hopkins, *Poems*, 5.

of a passing train. A naked example of it in verse, with the last element in each measure a pause, is in one of the most popular "dipodic" poems:

Boomalay boomalay boomalay boom. . . .

Patmore does not go further in describing explicitly the relationships of the elements of his rhythm measure, but he does make some interesting comments which imply the conditions of relationship. The first of these comments has to do with metrical stress and time. "Mitford, and other writers, who have treated of Latin and Greek verse as being 'metrical' and 'temporal,' and of our own as 'rhythmical' and 'accentual,' have fallen into the strange error of not perceiving that these four epithets apply to all possible kinds of metre, as far as they really are metre . . . the only change [from classical verse] as far as regards pure *metre* . . . is that which consists in rendering 'accentual' division of time the *sole,* instead of merely the *main* source of metre."[7] The phrase " 'accentual' division of time" here is important for its implications. The main accents may mark the time divisions, but the syllables which fill the metrical space must consume certain portions of that time. As Patmore points out, the considerations of accent and time are both present in the metre. If, moreover, as Patmore insists, measures containing four syllables are isochronous with those containing five or six, it follows that the syllables in the various measures do not consume equal portions of time. Since the variation in number of syllables occurs in the unemphatic parts of the measure, it is reasonable to suppose that these parts have a fairly fixed portion of time allotted to them. In the following verse, which Patmore would call a dipodic trimeter,

I sígh the lack of mány a thing I sóught,

the "y" and "a" of "many a" are shorter in duration than any of the other syllables, but the two of them are roughly equal to one of the other slack syllables. If the slack syllables fit into a certain portion of the metrical time, the question then arises as to what that portion of time is and how it is marked off.

Present-day "dipodic" theorists, in their eagerness to divorce metrical stress from time, suggest that the metrical fence-space is divided into four equal parts:

Primary stress / thesis / secondary / thesis

[7]Patmore, *Poems,* II, 235-6. Further references to Patmore's *Poems* and Hopkins' *Poems* are cited in the text rather than in footnotes, the former book being indicated by volume and page, the latter by page only.

Patmore, however, seems to suggest something else. In his discussion of syllabic time he says: "The time occupied in the actual articulation of a syllable is not necessarily its metrical value. *The time of a syllable in combination, is that which elapses from its commencement to the commencement of the succeeding syllable;* so that the monosyllables, a, as, ask, asks, ask'st, though requiring five degrees of time for their articulation, may have precisely the same temporal value in verse." (II, 237.) A syllable may, then, either gain or lose time in metrical combination. Two or more syllables may be compressed into the time of one, one syllable may be extended over the time of several, or the time of the same syllable may vary in relation to one next it: ". . . 'du liebst' [may constitute] a spondee, an iambus, or a trochee, according to the signification borne by the words. *The material or external element of syllabic quantity, is thus dissolved and lost in the spirituality which produces quantity instead of obeying it.*" (II, 259.) That spirituality which produces quantity is, fairly clearly, the *stress* which the rhythmical pattern imposes upon a syllable. If the "du liebst" be an iambus, the "du" loses in quantity because the stress is not on it; if it be a trochee, the "du" gains in quantity because the stress is on it. Both syllables will have equal time only if both be given equal stress, a spondee. In the light of these remarks of Patmore's, the relationships of the elements within the metrical space would seem to have certain general ratios. The primary stress, marking off the measures, also dominates the measure to such a degree that it can in itself absorb the time of the whole measure. The secondary stress, while it marks off a portion of time within the measure, yet marks a lesser portion of time than does the primary stress. The thesis syllables, by Patmore's inference, have a smaller portion of time, even as they have a smaller degree of emphasis, than a stressed syllable has.

There is every evidence in Hopkins' poems that he was familiar with these details of Patmore's theory and that he observed them carefully. But there is also evidence that once more he drew logical deductions from them which Patmore had not perceived. His recognition of the nature and proportional value of secondary stress is quite clear in such lines as

Nóthing is so béautiful as spríng,

or

Whát is all this júice and all this jóy?

in which he uses the simplest form of Patmore's measure, the form

which Patmore illustrates in the quotation from *The Merchant,* with secondary stress on the strong syllable of the second "trochaic foot" in each measure. It is significant that he uses these two lines deliberately (p. 105) as "sprung" measures introducing the separate sections of the sonnet. His strong consciousness of secondary stress may also be seen in his many coinings. "Inversnaid," for example, has a number of striking ones—"roll*rock* highroad," "wind*puff*-bonnet," "wiry heath*packs,*" "bead*bonny* ash"—which are obviously there to meet the demands of secondary accent. As for the shifting time relationships of adjacent syllables, in "The Caged Skylark," Hopkins illustrates, and carefully marks, one of the examples which Patmore uses, the word "sometimes":

> Both sing sometímes the sweetest, sweetest spells,
> Yet both droop deadly sómetimes in their cells. . . .

While his comprehension of the characteristics of the measure is clear enough, on the other hand his frequent avoiding of the repetition of its full patterns is equally deliberate. Here Hopkins goes far beyond Patmore or the "dipodic" poets in his recognition of the limitations as well as of the flexibility of sprung rhythm. This perception may well acount for his objection to *Piers Plowman,* from which Patmore quotes:

> I looked on my left halfe
> As the lady me taught,
> And was ware of a woman
> Worthlyith clothed,
> Purfiled with pelure
> The finest upon erthe;
> Crowned with a crowne,
> The king hath no better.

There is certainly the doggerel tendency here of which Hopkins complained, and that tendency is one inherent in sprung rhythm. As a measure of ordinary speech and prose, it is a grammatical rhythm or a sentence pattern. Hence, if it is used as a recurring metrical pattern, a basis of scansion, there will be nothing to play it against. In the poetry from which Patmore extracted it, it is played against some other underlying beat on which the poets were consciously building, and therefore it produces that "perpetual conflict between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language" which Patmore declares is essential to great poetry; but by itself it has a flat, one-dimensional quality. The serious limitation of the measure is

evident in most "dipodic" poems. The rolling, often trite rhythms of "Lepanto," "Cargoes," "The Congo," and so forth are entertaining up to a point, though one would soon be surfeited with them. On the other hand, when Meredith attempted to use sprung rhythm in a serious poem, the limitations of the verse often produced an incongrous effect upon the matter:

> Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
> Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
> When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
> In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
> Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
> Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

Even the "dipodic" poets, however, sense the need for varying the fully cadenced measures with others in which either the primary or the secondary stress, or both, are uncadenced. The most common variation is the juxtaposition of the two stresses uncadenced, as in Chesterton's "white *founts* falling," in Masefield's "road *rails*, pig *lead*," in Lindsay's "fat *black* bucks." This particular variation is almost forced upon the poet for relief from the monotony of the regular cadence, and it is one which Hopkins uses freely. However, he went far beyond the obvious variations of the rhythm in his attempt to regain the conflict between metre and sense. In his variations, he employs all degrees of metrical syllabic time. The following line from "The Windhover" is an interesting example of his technique:

> Stirred for a/bird,—the a/chieve of, the/mastery of the/thing!

In the first four of these sprung measures, there is a progressive uncoiling of the primary stress. In the first measure "stirred" contains not only all the time of the primary stress, but most of the time of the secondary stress also. Only the two secondary cadence syllables escape. In the second measure, the secondary stress is released in the pause, followed again by two syllables in cadence. The third measure emphasizes the secondary stress but reduces its cadence to one syllable. Finally, the fourth measure releases the full cadence of the primary stress also. This fourth measure is one that Patmore would easily recognize as a "mixed" measure of dactyl and trochee. Hopkins uses it here as a sort of time signature for the reading of the other measures of the line, measures in which he is applying the inferences of Patmore's theory though Patmore himself apparently did not recognize these logical refinements.

The same sort of process, though in reverse, is in the line from "Pied Beauty":

Glory be to/God for/dappled/things!

Here the first measure is the fully expanded time-signature foot, the second is the common variation of the uncadenced two stresses, the third draws all but one short syllable into the primary stress, and the fourth completes the drawing-in motion. There is no indication here that Hopkins is not conscious of the role of the secondary stress. There is, rather, every indication that he is deliberately avoiding monotonous expression of it. His diligence in avoiding the incipient weakness of sprung rhythm may be further seen in the astonishing variety which he achieves in the fourth line of each stanza of "The Deutschland," lines each of three stresses, for example:

Lord of/ living and/ dead
Thy) terror, O /Christ, O/ God
I)whirled out/ wings that/ spell
And it) crowds and it/ combs to the/ fall
Glow,/ glory in/ thunder
Swings the/ stroke/ dealt
Will,/ mouthed to/ flesh-burst
And) storms/ bugle his/ fame
Two) hundred/ souls in the/ round

A result of Hopkins' avoidance of the fully cadenced feet is evident in his comment: "Sprung Rhythm, as used in this book, is measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used." Patmore's measures, on the other hand, were regularly of four, five, or six syllables, depending on whether they were composed of two trochaic feet, two dactylic feet, or a mixture of trochee and dactyl.

The large number of syllables involved in his measures led Patmore to place severe limitations upon the number of "dipodic" feet, and hence upon the number of primary stresses which could be contained within a line. "All English verses in common cadence are therefore dimeters, trimeters, or tetrameters, and consist, when they are *full* . . . of eight, twelve, or sixteen syllables. Verses in triple cadence obey the same law, only their length never . . . exceeds that of the trimeter, on account of the great number of syllables or places

of syllables (twenty-four) which would be involved in a tetrameter in such cadence." Again, "dipodic" poets have apparently subscribed to this stricture. Only Hopkins appears to have made the logical connection between Patmore's separate dicta on isochronous measures, metrical syllabic time, and the number of measures possible in a line. If one syllable or two syllables can fill the time of several, there is no reason why a poet should not have as many stresses as he wishes; certainly he need not be restricted because of an unwieldy number of syllables. Hopkins' practice shows what his notes to the poems suggest, that he felt that if the rhythm is established, the other feet in the line may vary as to the number of syllables and yet keep the isochronous nature of the metre. Hence the importance of the time-signature feet which we have noted.

Patmore's preoccupation with the number of syllables in his new measure led him further to make an inaccurate generalization concerning the nature of the conventional iambic pentameter line. This line (of ten syllables) he declares to be a line of three main stresses, an incomplete trimeter, whose complete form is to be seen in the Alexandrine (twelve syllables). Hopkins' pleasure in paradox, which Bridges deplores, may clearly be seen in the many deductions which Hopkins appears to make about the nature of this line as he develops his sonnets. Conceivably, in the opening lines of two of the sonnets, Patmore could have found his trimeter verses:

> Sometimes a lantern moves along the night,
> That interests our eyes. And who goes there?
> I think; where from and bound, I wonder, where,
> With, all down darkness wide, his wading light?

and

> I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
> What hours, O what black hoürs we have spent
> This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
> And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

At any rate, there would not be greater distortion in so scanning the lines than there is in Patmore's scansion of the lines from *The Merchant of Venice.*

However, it is quite impossible to make trimeters of the verses in "The Windhover," and here we come upon one of Hopkins' departures from Patmore's conclusions. Since the men who wrote in iambic pentameters were consciously building on five beats, Hopkins apparently felt that it would be reasonable in sprung rhythm to keep the five-beat idea and build sonnets of sprung pentameter verses. This

verse basis is the one Hopkins uses in "The Windhover." He makes the five-beat verse pattern clear by the simple, strongly marked measures of the first line, and then goes on to develop it:

I) caught this/ morning/ morning's/ minion,/ king-
dom of/ daylight's/ dauphin,/ dapple-dawn-drawn/ Falcon, is his/
riding
Of the/ rolling/ level underneath him/ steady/ air, and/ striding/
High there, how he/ rung upon the/ rein of a/ wimpling/ wing
In his/ ecstasy! . . .

He describes this as "falling Paeonic rhythm," and it is worth noting that in the elaborated lines he is careful to establish the fully cadenced time-signature feet ("dapple-dawn-drawn," "Falcon in his," "High there, how he," "rung upon the") which in turn govern the reading of the first line. But Hopkins carries his consideration of the original sonnet line still further. If the usual ten syllables are merely an incomplete Alexandrine, then the true basis of the line is a six-beat rhythm. This deduction Hopkins illustrates in his sonnet "Henry Purcell," which he notes is "Alexandrine: six stresses to the line":

Have) fair/ fallen, O/ fair,/ fair have/ fallen, so/ dear
To me, so/ arch-e/ special a/ spirit as/ heaves in/ Henry/
Purcell. . . .

More often among his sonnets, however, there seems to be a bewildering variety in the number of feet within his verses. In "Duns Scotus's Oxford," for instance, the first line has three or possibly four feet, the second certainly has five, and the last line just as certainly has four:

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmed, lark-charmed, rook-racked,
river-rounded. . . .

Who fired France for Mary without spot.

In this matter, again, Hopkins shows a more perceptive study of metrical characteristics than does Patmore. As his sonnet to Bridges shows, within the conventional sonnet he has observed lines with three main stresses, lines with four main stresses, and lines with five main stresses. Indeed, this poem is almost a dissertation on variety of line within the sonnet form. The following verses from it illustrate the variety which he displays:

she long
Within her wears, bears, cares and moulds the same: . . . .

O then if in my lagging lines you miss
The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

This sonnet is conventional in the sense that, except for its fourth line, it could be scanned in the usual iambic fashion, and this fact Hopkins seems to be pointing out, half-ironically, half-disconsolately, to Bridges. In his own sonnets, he is merely applying to sprung rhythm the same abundance of variations which he found everywhere in English sonnets. However, if he is showing Bridges that his sprung measures are only employing traditional variations, he is also illustrating the weakness of Patmore's "law" about the measure of poetry. The iambic pentameter line is not simply a trimeter, a line of three main stresses; it has great elasticity of stress which does not allow of the mechanical counting of alternate accents which is the basis of Patmore's "dipodic" theory. Hopkins shows that poetic measure is much more complicated than Patmore's simple rule implies.

The sonnet provided Hopkins with a medium within which great freedom and flexibility were familiar. They were possible, as they had always been possible, because of the clear disciplines of the outer form both in rhyme scheme and in the divisions of octet and sestet, or theme and resolution. Within his verses, not only does he indicate the relationships of time by the key measure, but as Mr. Whitehall points out, he also employs devices of "constant alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, and word repetition," that bring out the inner structure. However, in a rhythm as free as that which Hopkins strove for, the further discipline of outer form is essential to the full realization of the internal music. Here again is a conception of poetic composition, though not at all a new one, which appears in the "Essay on English Metrical Law." Patmore points out that Hegel, "whose chapters on music and metre" are the philosophic basis for his theory, maintains that the substitution of accentual division of time for true syllabic quantity necessitates an outer force which will have the function of a time-marker. This function is fulfilled by "rhyme . . . of which the very grossness, as compared with syllabic quantity, is a great advantage" (p. 259). Furthermore, rhyme is "a means of indefinitely extending the limits, and multiplying the symmetry of measure by the formation of stanzas." Stanzas, then, in themselves add to the many tangible and intangible elements which go to make up the music, law, and proportion of poetry. There is, moreover, a further consideration involved in stanza form. It is that of run-on scansion,

which both Patmore and Hopkins champion. The verse has its individual metrical purpose, but that purpose is subordinated to the theme of the whole unit, which must be sufficiently limited in scope to allow the melody pattern to remain clear. Such pattern is important in Hopkins' conception of his poems. The sonnets are carefully and elaborately built musical statements. Sometimes the statement is one long melody; sometimes it is broken into phrases of 4, 4, 3, 3, verses; sometimes it consists of theme and one or more "codas." In his longer poems, in which the form is not marked by the peculiar structure of the sonnet, the stanzas are carefully used to "multiply the symmetry of measure." Of "The Loss of the Eurydice," Hopkins says, "each stanza is rather one long line rhymed in passage than four lines with rhymes at the ends." These long lines, symmetrical in pattern, become the variations on the theme as they add to and enforce the opening statement. The idea of variation on a theme comes out most clearly, perhaps, in the meticulously built up stanza form of "The Deutschland," in which the image of the hourglass, which Mr. Mizener shows is an important one,[8] seems to be presented to the ear. Rhyme and therefore stanza form (for Patmore excludes the couplet as producing inferior poetry) are accepted by both Patmore and Hopkins as having inherent aesthetic value. Certainly there was no barrier between the two men here as Mr. Whitehall suggests there was when he says that Hopkins' "concessions to stanzaic form" hindered his comprehension of Patmore. Hopkins' practice in his concern with stanza forms shows rather an agreement with Patmore's values.

While Hopkins agrees with Patmore in the matters of rhyme and stanza, of isochronous measures and of syllabic time, his differences with him are significant ones. He first places the new measure on its true foundation as a rhythm of "common speech and written prose," rather than on Patmore's curious and unreliable "dipodic" rule. He breaks through the inflexibility of Patmore's strictures on the number of measures which may be contained in a single line of poetry. He shows the fallibility of Patmore's observations on the iambic pentameter line, and in the process he produces the most convincing rebuttal of all the terms of Patmore's law. Nevertheless, he uses Patmore's measure forcefully, subtly, brilliantly as a rhythmic basis of verse.

[8]Arthur Mizener, "Victorian Hopkins" in *Hopkins: By the Kenyon Critics*, 111.

III

Behind Patmore's admiration for rhyme, stanza form, and "dipodic" measure, there are a number of aesthetic ideas, to some of which Hopkins apparently subscribed, for a time at any rate. One of Patmore's beliefs was in the early and continually desirable identification of poetry and music. As a result, he develops an aesthetic which postulates that the poetry which most closely approaches that which it is not, music, is the highest of its kind. His scale of values is apparent in the latter part of his statement that "the co-ordination of life and law, in the matter and form of poetry, determines the different degrees and kinds of metre, from the half-prosaic dramatic verse to the extremest elaboration of high lyric metres" (II, 221). Pursuing his musical analogy as the basis for judgment of poetry, Patmore finds that "in verses which strike the ear as extraordinarily musical, the peculiarity is mainly owing to an unusually distinct and emphatic accentuation of the first syllable in the metrical section" (II, 245).

Hopkins makes clear what this judgment is based on when he says that it is convenient in scanning poetry to take the stress first "as the accent or the chief accent always comes first in a musical bar." Both men are basing poetic judgments, and present-day "dipodic" theorists follow them, on the musical convention of the bar system. There is here, surely, a curious anachronism. Both men are trying to establish universal metrical principles, and yet they base their attempts on a late arising musical convention which is in no sense universal. Almost as soon as the bar system was firmly established for the guidance of the various voices and instruments, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, there began to develop the special vocabulary and signs by which musicians try to overcome its tyranny. Composers further developed the system of changing time-signature within their compositions in order to allow for free variation in rhythm and tempo. Then came the unusual measures of 5/4, 7/8 time, and eventually some modern composers abandoned the bar divisions altogether in order to emphasize larger patterns of symmetry and proportion. Yet both Patmore and Hopkins erect this musicians' convenience, with its tendency to place the strong accent on the first beat, into a fundamental law of poetry, and use it as a standard of aesthetic judgment. That they are uneasy about this is indicated when they both insist that there are rising rhythms as well as falling rhythms in poetry, which distinctions, says Hopkins, "are real and true to nature." Nevertheless, when they come to apply the musical

analogy to the more minute measures of poetry, the effect is to eliminate rising rhythms altogether. Patmore's examples are all given in terms of trochees and dactyls, and Hopkins says quite bluntly that if the musical custom is followed in the scanning of poetry "there will be in common English verse only two possible feet—the so-called accentual Trochee and Dactyl, and correspondingly only two possible rhythms, the so-called Trochaic and Dactylic."

This conclusion is an odd one in view of the dominance of the iambic pentameter line from Chaucer to Bridges. Patmore circumvents any possible impasse in an ingenious fashion. Those poets who thought they were writing iambic pentameters either were unconsciously writing "dipodic" trimeters or else they were poor poets; only Milton is an exception to the rule. In his judgments, Patmore claps nineteenth-century taste on poetic virtue. He discovers that the poetry which is the most musical, and therefore the highest in degree, has a falling note and moreover can be pressed into his new measures. That poetry which does not show such qualities is either "half-prosaic dramatic verse" or, worse still, "Pope's couplet." Of the couplet, Patmore says with an air of triumph: "The fault of this couplet is not only its essentially epigrammatic character, which is but a relative defect; it is, furthermore, absolutely faulty, inasmuch as the combination of immediately recurrent rhyme, with the long final pause, gives an emphasis contrasting too strongly with the very weak accentual construction of the line, which, *as it is ordinarily treated,* has no sectional—i.e., 'dipodal'—division" (II, 261). He is thus able, from the basis of his theory of what poetry ought to be, to reject the works of the eighteenth century. Lest he seem to be prejudiced against the eighteenth century, however, Patmore prefaces these remarks with the somewhat surprising comment that "the heroic measure of Chaucer and his successors [was] regarded as fit only for humorous subjects." Having disposed of the couplet and dramatic blank verse, he approaches the problem of non-dramatic blank verse. His great admiration for Milton, "who first taught us what this kind of verse ought to be," affords him an easy way out of his difficulty here. Only "the transcendent genius of Milton" was able to achieve the metrically improbable, great poetry in iambic pentameters. This happy coincidence of contemporary taste with poetic theory no doubt appealed to Hopkins also, for, as Mr. Mizener points out, much of Hopkins' thinking as a poet "is that of the typical 19th century Englishman." Yet the difficulty of reconciling "dipodic" theory and the evidence of the English poetic tradition does exist, and it is pos-

sible that Hopkins' eventual recognition of it lies behind the apparent capitulation to convention in his later poems. It is also possible that the more he came to know about music, the clearer appeared the fallacy of submitting poetry to its laws and conventions.

Bridges says: "It is lamentable that Gerard Hopkins died when, to judge by his latest work, he was beginning to concentrate the force of all his luxuriant experiments in rhythm and diction, and castigate his art into a more reserved style." Yet among the later poems are "Harry Ploughman" and "Heraclitean Fire," which show little evidence of castigation. Neither does Hopkins' note on the sonnet "Alfonsus": "The sonnet (I say it snorting) aims at being intelligible." He has not abandoned sprung rhythm, but the other late poems suggest that he is willing to admit other rhythms. Sprung rhythm, or "dipodic" rhythm, is not the only rhythm in poetry, nor yet possibly is it the music of the spheres.

WHY STUDY THE CLASSICS IN THIS BUSY WORLD?

G. M. A. Grube

THE study of the ancient Greek and Latin classics is far too often praised somewhat apologetically merely in terms of the education of the individual student. Because a Classical education used to be considered, in the nineteenth century and before, as the only education for a gentleman—rather like the grand tour of Europe—it is still defended or attacked in much the same terms, with only slight changes in terminology. But that, in our different twentieth century, is not enough. Besides, many fine gentlemen never travelled across Europe, and many a fine citizen and community leader today knows no Latin and less Greek.

It is not enough to show that the study of the Greek and Roman civilizations provides a good education for the individual. If we expect modern governments to expend the money, time, and talents required to make Classical studies readily available for those who want to pursue them in the public systems of education, it is necessary to show that Classical studies have definite social value and are necessary to the community as a whole. For without governmental support, Classical studies will die out or become (perhaps I should say remain) an esoteric possession of the privileged few.

That this would be a tragedy I have no doubt, for I am convinced that a widely diffused knowledge of the classical authors is essential to the community, that if the classics are neglected our society will suffer from that neglect. And, if such a belief may seem to some to be expected from a professor of Classics in any case, I can only reply that the more closely I have observed, and participated in, public affairs over the years, the more firm that conviction has become. It has been strengthened in the market-place, not in the classroom.

What is a Classical education? Clearly it is far more than the study of Latin and Greek. That study itself is not lacking in educational values, even if, essentially, they are only the tools with which to do the job. It is too often forgotten that from the fall of the pre-Greek civilization of Crete, around 1400 B.C., to the fall of Constantinople which brought the Byzantine empire to an end in the fifteenth century A.D. lie three thousand years of European history during the major part of which any civilization that existed in Europe was Greek

or Roman, and during all of which Latin and Greek were the only major languages, the only languages through which European culture currently expressed itself. In space, the Greco-Roman civilization (for it was *one*) extended far beyond Europe; in time, the use of both Latin and Greek continued long after the fifteenth century. Greek and Latin hold the key to the study of that Western civilization of which we in North America are a part—to the study of its thought, its literature, its art, and its religions.

We can appreciate the vast area covered by the classical languages if we reflect that Chaucer lived less than six centuries ago. Homer had lived for eight hundred years before Virgil loved and imitated him; the last "classical" Greek poet, Musaeus, came six centuries later. Six hundred years of uninterrupted philosophic study lie between Plato and Plotinus, the founder of neo-Platonism, which became the last bulwark against the onset of Christianity. And Christian thought itself used Latin and Greek exclusively for fifteen centuries.

Our debt to Greece and Rome in their more strictly "classical" periods is often recognized, but less attention is generally paid to this obvious fact—no doubt because it is so obvious—that for twenty-five centuries Greek and Latin were the universal languages of Western culture.

Can modern man, by neglecting these languages entirely, cut himself off from his own history? Can he understand himself by himself? Many seem to think so, and they generally point to the great scientific achievements of the modern Western world to prove that we live in an entirely different age. Yet that great scientific advance does not seem to have brought any clear answer to the question raised by the Greek: What is the good life? Most of our great scientific discoveries are less than a century old. You might as well argue, then, that history for the average man should start in 1800 or 1850, or even 1900.

We know today (Plato knew it too) that the adult is largely conditioned by the child he has been, indeed the child he still is. We know that a country or nation is inevitably conditioned by its past, often its distant past; its behaviour patterns arise from it. Neither modern man nor modern civilization can be fully understood without some knowledge of their more immediate past. Neither five years nor five centuries constitute that past, or are sufficient equipment with which any community can grasp the present or face the future. The past and the present are but part of one continuing process. Past centuries are, in that sense, a part of the present as the child is part

of the man, and a very important part. This is no less true for North Americans than it is, more obviously, for Europeans.

That does not mean that every school child should be compelled to learn Latin or Greek. True, advanced studies in many subjects are impossible without a knowledge of one or both of those languages, and a good case can be made for the study of Latin or Greek as a basis for the study of languages generally, including our own. But I am not concerned here with Latin or Greek as compulsory subjects. In any case, beyond the elementary techniques of reading, writing, and arithmetic, Plato may have been right when he said that nothing worth while is learned under compulsion. My concern is much more fundamental. Because Latin and Greek are essential to a study of our own past, it is essential they should be available throughout our educational system to all those whose talents and inclinations lead them in that direction. It is vital that such studies be encouraged rather than discouraged. But in many, perhaps most, parts of Canada, this is not the case. Even in our rich province of Ontario, and in its large centres of population, the study of Latin, and even more of Greek, is actively discouraged by school principals and school authorities, and only taught under such conditions (out of school hours, etc.) as would stifle even the most popular and the most obviously "useful" subjects. It says much for the vitality of Greek that it has not died out long ago in our schools and universities. Educational authorities who suppress or discourage Classical studies, and there are a great many of them, are making a grave mistake which we may well live to regret, if indeed we do live. In a truly democratic society that study must not become the monopoly of any group, social, racial, or religious. It should act as a leaven through the whole community.

The general argument about the study of our history holds, of course, in a general way, for all human history; and on behalf of all history (using the word in its widest sense) it should be listened to. But the achievements, the dreams, and the disillusionments recorded in Greek and Latin are peculiarly our own because they are a part of that particular civilization to which we belong.

Yet, as already mentioned, the study of Greek and Latin is only a part of the study of the classics. It gives the student and scholar a potential capacity to roam over the centuries of Western history at will, a capacity of which far too few make any consistent use. In the more restricted sense, Classical studies mean the study of the two greatest periods of cultural development in Greece and Rome. This covers roughly a thousand years, beginning with Homer and extending to Plotinus, from the ninth century B.C. to at least the third

century A.D., with special emphasis for Greece on the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., and for Rome on the four centuries around the birth of Christ. During those periods the peoples of the Mediterranean reached a stage of civilization quite unprecedented, and higher than any in the Western world until our own times. Their influence, direct and indirect, on later history was tremendous. It is from the Renaissance, the Rebirth of Classical studies, that our own civilization received its main impetus.

On the threshold of the Greek period stands Homer, the greatest epic poet of all, and one of the world's great story-tellers, but there is little about Homer that is primitive. His is a highly sophisticated poetry, clearly the culmination of a long period of artistic development. All the Greeks were brought up on Homer; the outlook of the Homeric hero was part and parcel of their mental and emotional life. In a sense the Homeric hero is still, for better or for worse, embedded in the mental make-up of Western man generally, and he has his being in poetry that is both very great and ever fresh.

Then, from the seventh century B.C. on, came that sudden flowering of the Greek, and in particular the Athenian, genius. The lyric poets of Ionia foreshadowed the value of the individual, as democracy was born and human freedoms were understood and developed in practice. The Greek language was consciously moulded into what perhaps still remains the most sensitive instrument for the expression of human thought, dreams, and passions. Literature and the arts reached standards undreamed of before, in the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the comedies of Aristophanes, the marbles of Pheidias. Athenian clarity of thought was brought to bear on history by Thucydides, still recognized today as one of the world's great historians, while Socrates was teaching men to think for themselves and apply their thought to the problem of goodness. Mathematics, astronomy, medicine, biology, logic, and the natural sciences were all established by men for whom poetry and music, together with athletics, made up the essence of their education.

That great creative upsurge of the fifth century was followed by the critical achievements of the fourth when the fundamental concepts of Western thought, foreshadowed by Socrates and his predecessors, were established in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, who were followed by the Stoics and Epicureans. Upon those philosophies all later philosophy has been built.

During the two centuries of classical Greece the human mind took a sudden leap forward in almost every field of endeavour, a leap

which, in its rapidity and the extent of its effects on human history, can be compared only to the equally sudden developments in the scientific field during the last hundred years. Our development in this respect is as remarkable and as portentous. What its results will be no one can yet foretell, but in the study of man, of good and evil, our advance is much less certain and less confident. Even today, with Classical studies at a low ebb, teachers in various fields such as philosophy, sociology, art and literature, political science, start their studies from the Greek achievement, and many are those who find an ignorance of Greek a serious handicap in the pursuit of their own studies.

The Greek armies of Alexander the Great conquered the known world as far as the Indus towards the end of the fourth century B.C. They could not hold it together after his early death, but Greek culture spread all over Asia and Greek became the common language of the Middle East. But the Greeks failed to transcend the city state as an effective political form. They were familiar enough with the theory of the federation of states, but failed to rise above their local patriotisms. It is no straining of historical parallels to suggest that the modern world may fail on an even larger scale in much the same way.

The Romans were to undertake, two centuries later, the practical organization of the world which the successors of Alexander failed to pacify, and the five centuries of Roman greatness begin very shortly after the Greek classical period. The two cultures are universally recognized as two branches of the same tree. Yet their achievement was very different, as were their characters. They might almost be taken as typical of the essential dichotomy of human nature, of those two types seldom united in one. The Roman was essentially the man of action, the organizer, the extrovert—as against the intellectual, artistic, brilliant but less stable Greek. The difference of character is mirrored in their languages. It has been said that not only in the rolling periods of Cicero but in the hexameters of Virgil you can sense at times the tramp of the Roman legions, and in the more subtle Greek, the rapid interplay of light and shade.

The arts remained Greek to the end; but Rome gave us more oratory, the organization of the great empire, the imperial roads along which travelled not only the legions but language and culture as well, and the development of the law. Roman law is as much at the root of modern law as Plato and Aristotle are at the base of all Western philosophy. Classical scholars, being mostly intellectuals rather than men of action, for the most part prefer to study Greece. They point out, with truth, that a good deal even of Roman law

originated in Greece. Yet the Roman empire has left very much more of its characteristics embedded in our institutions, even if some of them were inherited from Greece.

We should frankly recognize that, where Greece was at her best, Rome did not compete; it was rather the practical arts that she developed. There is no Roman drama comparable to either the Athenian tragedies or the comedies of Aristophanes. There is no Roman philosophy, only the adaptation of Greek originals. There are a few great poets who carefully studied the Greek originals; Virgil was a very great poet who wrote an epic but few would claim that he was to the epic born. There was not, even under Augustus, any such tremendous flowering of the arts as in fifth-century Athens. Nor is there, in Roman history and in spite of many civil wars, that sturdy vindication of human freedoms. The Roman was proud of Rome; the Athenian loved Athens. But the organizing genius of the Romans did solve the political problem. They solved it by the sword, but conquest was accompanied by a genius for colonization, by a shrewd appreciation of the value of the velvet glove over the iron fist which came very close at least to a genuine respect for other peoples' institutions and ways of living. And the Romans did give the Mediterranean world several centuries of comparative peace, and developed a Roman citizenship that was very nearly a world citizenship, based on military power and civil law. Indeed, for a time, they almost realized the Stoic dream of a world society and a world state. These Roman men of action seemed crude to the frustrated and contemptuous Greeks, but there is no doubt of their greatness in action.

These two branches of European civilization together form the subject-matter of Classical studies as taught in our universities. Together they cover over a thousand years of political development, of literary and artistic activity, of continuous philosophical thought, of history in all its aspects. One reproach sometimes applied to it a Classical education at least does not deserve: it can hardly be called narrow.

Perhaps enough has been said to show why it is important for the community as a whole that a Classical education, and the learning of Latin and Greek which must precede it, should be widely available in our systems of public education: the languages themselves offer the only way to retain any living contact with the greater part—nearly five-sixths—of our own Western history; they also make available an insight into, and recreate continually our understanding of, the classical ages of Greece and Rome. How much enjoyment and inspiration

we can still draw from them only a more detailed study of their various aspects can make clear.

But of course the social value of any study does not end there. Educated individuals, integrated, well-balanced, and well-informed citizens, above all citizens with a social conscience are a great asset, indeed the greatest asset, to any community. And we are therefore justified in answering now the further question of what qualities a Classical education tends to develop in the individual. Why was it once regarded as a necessary part of a liberal education; why is it still regarded by many in that light?

Before we answer this question we should be clear as to what are the aims of education in any form, and this might take us far afield. We may legitimately say, however, that education obviously should provide the following four things, which any educated person (whether formally educated or not) should possess: (1) the capacity to use his own language with some skill and clarity; (2) the capacity to think clearly, without being blinded by prejudice and emotion; (3) a feeling of citizenship, of being a member of his community, the possession of a social conscience, and a reasonable understanding of the society in which he lives; (4) the capacity to enjoy leisure and to use it creatively. I have not included the capacity to earn one's living, though that is a necessary aim of any system of schooling. That is training. Training is important, and many kinds of training have educational value. Essentially, however, vocational training is not education, which is a kind of general training for life. Nor have I included that instruction in elementary techniques, such as reading, writing, and reckoning, and the technical knowledge required by any member of a modern community. They too are an essential part of schooling, but they are prerequisites to education in the sense in which we are discussing it. In any case, our list does not pretend to be exhaustive. How far does a Classical education help the attainment of our four aims?

Language is the only instrument we possess for the formulation and communication of thought. Everybody uses it every day. Its skilful use is a source of unending delight and in this respect we should all be artists in a measure. The Greek sophist Hippias once defined the art of speaking (and writing) as the ability to express your meaning clearly and simply and then to stop, and his definition is hard to beat. The inability of supposedly educated people to conform to it is a source of great distress to their listeners or readers. The common use or abuse of language in conversation, on the platform, in

the press, is appalling. Even many university text-books are written in an obscure, laboured and sloppy jargon; and our modern habit of using "six foot" words, as Horace called them, and unnecessary abstractions is almost universal. Yet clarity of thought requires clarity of language and is impossible without it.

Now clarity, simplicity, and concreteness in expression are very characteristic of ancient Greek which, as a language, is probably unrivalled in its capacity to express shades of meaning and to bring out the logical connection of thought between one clause and the next. Both Greek and Latin normally express this connection clearly when we imply it, often leaving it vague and obscure. Both, as inflected languages, express by different case-endings and verbal forms the interrelation of parts of a sentence. Hence training in Greek and Latin composition is recognized by all those who have been submitted to it and have enjoyed it as fostering a mental discipline of its own, as a healthy corrective to our laboured, indirect, and unnecessarily abstract ways of expressing ourselves. There is no better way to discover the precise meaning of a piece of contemporary prose (or its lack of meaning) than to attempt to render it in Latin or Greek.

It is generally admitted that the study of another language is a powerful help to the proper use of one's own. This might be claimed for any modern foreign language and not merely for the classics, though not to the same extent, for modern thought has much in common and you can often translate from one modern European language into another while retaining the same vagueness of thought. That cannot be done when translating into Latin and Greek. Translation the other way round also has its uses, though the discipline is not so intense. At any rate, the making of a correct translation at all times requires a far greater concentration on the exact use of words than the writing of an original essay.

All this quite apart from any direct help that Greek and Latin may give to the understanding of the roots and etymologies of modern words. This, however, has often been exaggerated. It may be amusing (and as such a help to the teacher) to learn that the word democracy is derived from the Greek words δῆμος, meaning people, and κρατεῖν, to rule, and that democracy thus means the rule of the people. But since you knew the meaning of democracy before you started, it is hardly worth learning Greek in order to discover it! Besides, etymologies are often as misleading as they are illuminating. What does help is to know the real meaning of δῆμος, who the Athenian people were, why and how they ruled. Then you do widen your understanding of democracy. It is not the Greek roots, it is the full flavour and associa-

tion of the living Greek words that is significant. That is the legacy of the Greek and Latin languages. The fact, on the other hand, that so many terms in our political, social, artistic, philosophic, and religious lives do derive from Greek and Latin is highly significant of how much we owe them. It is what came with the words, however, rather than the etymology, that is important.

We may well claim, then, that the study of Latin and Greek can contribute considerably to the careful and effective use of one's own language, and, incidentally, heighten considerably one's enjoyment of its use.

Our second educational aim was the capacity to think clearly and freely. This requires detachment from irrational emotional reaction, from the traditions, taboos, and prejudices of our own social and economic groups, our own community, even our own century. We may, after free examination, conclude that some of these traditions or beliefs are well founded, thus reaching free acceptance of them and intellectual acquiescence, which is very different from slavish conformity, and infinitely better. Others we may reject, as is our right. For if we in truth believe that truth will make us free, then our educational process must allow for the free examination of the truth. Especially in our own uncertain day we, the elders, who have made the world what it is, have little right to expect from the next generation any kind of unreasoning acceptance.

In attaining the necessary detachment, considerable help can be found in the study of a civilization which, while part of our common heritage, is yet far enough removed from us in time and sufficiently different in customs and traditions to provide a challenging contrast that can be studied without immediate emotional reaction on our part. Such study can make a powerful contribution to our own mental balance. There is, in classical, and especially Greek, culture a directness of approach to the problems of life and a freedom from cant (also an absence of taboos) that is most refreshing. And yet their problems, though on a smaller scale, are so very often essentially like our own. Our own civilization five centuries ago found in the Rebirth of Greek and Roman studies the inspiration that led to a rebirth of human freedom and a renewed struggle for democracy that is still in process. Ever since the Renaissance the great classics have acted as a lever and a leaven in the struggle to free men from shackles mental as well as physical. They are still needed today; we are not self-sufficient yet. They can still contribute both detachment and inspiration.

The third characteristic of an educated man we defined as a sense of citizenship, a social conscience, and some understanding of the world we live in. To a considerable extent, all humanistic studies are a help here, and the classics not least. By showing the essential kinship of human thought in action over many centuries they inevitably develop a sense of kinship with mankind. Moreover, the Greek city state, and Athens particularly, attained a delicate and almost perfect balance between the individual and the state. To Plato and Aristotle no man could be good who was not a good citizen. Most revealing in this respect is the terrible contrast between that fusion of ethics with politics in the fifth and fourth centuries on the one hand and the despairing and withdrawn individualism of the later philosophers who lived at a time when that precarious balance between the individual and the community had been lost. Here indeed is a contrast worth pondering over, and he must be an insensitive student indeed who can study that contrast in all its implications without awakening a social conscience within himself. No study in itself can guarantee a social conscience, but it is not surprising that, on the whole, Classical scholars as a tribe are restless in the ivory tower. Familiarity with the great writers and thinkers of Greece, deeply concerned as they were almost without exception with their own contemporary world, must inevitably lead any thinking student to an attempt to understand his own.

Finally, we spoke of the creative use of leisure, leisure being, as stated by Aristotle, the free time that remains after we have been rested and refreshed by recreation. All humanistic studies, of course, are a help here. Classical studies too, opening up as they do a vista of twenty-five centuries, give almost unbounded opportunities for literary, historical, philosophical, or archaeological hobbies and pursuits, for interests that can be carried over into modern times. Furthermore, the reading of so many masterpieces (for though by no means all classical remains are great or even good, there are a great many works absolutely great) provides one with a standard of judgment which, if it is not allowed to ossify, should stand the student in good stead. And the Greeks themselves had a very keen appreciation of the value of leisure.

These are some of the qualities that a Classical education should tend to develop. Not, of course, that every graduate in Classics is a paragon of all these virtues. No amount of education, and no kind of education can make a wise man out of a fool or a saint out of a pirate. It can only make them less foolish or less piratical.

There is, however, one objection which will occur to many who have followed me thus far: "Granted that a study of Greece and Rome, and of the whole twenty-five centuries, is of definite value to the community. Cannot this, or a good deal of it, be got from translations? Must so much time be spent in this busy world actually learning Latin and Greek?"

Undoubtedly something can be got from translations. People who have not the time or the inclination to study Latin and Greek need not be debarred from any knowledge of them. My plea, be it repeated, is only that those who want to learn them shall have the opportunity of doing so. We should always remember, however, that every translation is an interpretation, and that the more able the translator the more he interprets. This is true not only of poetry (which is notoriously untranslatable) but of philosophy, and thought generally. It is not the Greek and Latin originals but their translations that are dead. Words are living things, their life is the sum-total of their associations in the minds of both writer and reader (or hearer). In trying to find an equivalent word, the translation tries to empty the modern word of its own very different association, and thereby kills it. The translator's worst difficulties do not arise from unusual or obscure words; it is the most common words that are the hardest. The Greek word "psyche" does not mean "soul," "theos" does not mean "god" (and even less "God"), etc. To such common words there are no adequate equivalents.

Yet translations are useful. They can provide a good historical knowledge of Greek and Latin institutions, an approximate knowledge of their thought, and even an appreciation of literary techniques. Courses based on translations can give a great deal, provided the teachers themselves are fully familiar with the originals, more closely familiar, indeed, than those who lecture on the originals need to be. No one without that familiarity should be allowed to teach Classics, or Latin or Greek at any stage, however elementary. It should be unnecessary to add that no one should write popular books or text-books on classical civilization, or any aspect of it, without Classical training. Given those safeguards, a good deal can be learned from translations. For the Classical teacher will teach you something of the originals *through* the translations. Others will teach the translations. There is a world of difference between the two. If translations are to fulfil their proper function for the many, there must be a sufficient number of Classicists about to reinterpret constantly the originals for each generation, and a fairly widely distributed, if limited,

knowledge of the languages themselves to make that process of reinterpretation a living part of the community's mental equipment and attitude.

From Greece and Rome our Western world learned many things, not least among them the importance of a sense of beauty, a respect for reason and the law, and the importance of the individual. With the ancient philosophers originated our concepts of the brotherhood of man and the dream of cosmopolis. In these and many other ways the ancients, and particularly the Greeks, made vital contributions to our sense of values. Many of their contributions were powerfully reinforced by the Christian tradition; some are at variance with it. The Romans also made possible the spread of Christianity itself.

Philosophy, aesthetics, art, politics, ethics, and religion are not sciences that absorb earlier discoveries which then retain only an antiquarian interest. They do not progress in the same sure way because what they are seeking is the meaning and purpose of life, to which there is no certain answer. The earlier answers in those fields still have a value of their own, and the experience of peoples as civilized as ourselves remains richly significant to us. That is why, in spite of all handicaps and obstacles, the study of the classics has survived into the dawn of the atomic age. That is why also one looks with fearful apprehension to a society where that source of creative inspiration remains available only to the very few.

REVIEWS

PATTERNS OR PEOPLE?*

R. S. KNOX

One of the most fashionable critical activities today, obviously in line with the practice of contemporary poetry, is the study of imagery as perhaps the basic element in a poem's structure and import. Inevitably this technique has been applied to the interpretation of Shakespearian drama. The spade work of digging out and classifying the images was first done with real thoroughness by Miss Spurgeon. She laid particular stress on the recurrent imagery in a play, with its function of "raising and sustaining emotion, in providing atmosphere or emphasizing a theme." But in the view of many who followed her she had not dug deeply enough or had missed the significance of what she had brought up. Mr. Heilman thinks so, and in his analysis of *King Lear* reveals what can be done by his own more cogent methods. He is concerned not primarily "with images as such but with the structure of a meaning in which images, whether the image words are used literally or figuratively, have an important role." He too stresses repetition as in itself a mode of meaning. Throughout there are recurrent words, key words, recurrent comments on certain themes, which, in their relation to the more strictly dramatic facts, build up a series of interwoven patterns, a series of ideas embodying the total statement of the play.

He first picks out the sight pattern. This centres on the blinding and blindness of Gloucester whose flaw is lack of insight, but it is used to qualify all the main characters and involves a whole family of cross-references in incident, image, and word. "Shakespeare has found sight a flexibly responding symbol for the problems which arise in connection with the point of view from which man judges the meaning of experience." Even if we allow Mr. Heilman's demonstration of the pattern, the doubt remains whether in his zeal for completeness he does not draw too much within its scope. Is it not a trifle far-fetched to say that "when Edgar tells Gloucester that he can no longer look down the supposed cliff lest 'the deficient sight topple down headlong,' we can only think of the deficient sight that causes disaster throughout the play, and of those whom it has indeed toppled down headlong"? Again, would anyone else, however pattern-

**This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear.* By ROBERT B. HEILMAN. Louisiana State University Press. 1948. Pp. ix, 339. ($3.50)

Shakespearian Tragedy. By H. B. CHARLTON. Cambridge: at the University Press [Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada]. 1948. Pp. ix, 246. ($3.50)

A Notebook on William Shakespeare. By EDITH SITWELL. London: Macmillan [Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada]. 1948. Pp. xii, 233. ($4.25)

minded, reading the phrase "Let's see," spoken by Lear on waking from his madness, "recall that Gloucester, when he said 'Let's see,' was being gulled, and that Edgar used the same words when he was skilfully managing a situation"? The clothes pattern, with its dramatic elements in the clothing and nakedness of the characters and its recurrent imagery, may admittedly be held to make a systematic commentary upon the difficulties of perceiving the world truly and on the defencelessness of innocent people, but it is surely pedantic to say of Lear's "undo this button": "These unobtrusive words extend imaginatively way beyond the bare psychological fact which at the realistic level they denote; they are a means of pulling together a whole series of lines into an embracing system of meaning . . . they tell us of a final freeing from clothes that can be followed by no new agony." There is a like interesting if over-minute exposition of the nature pattern, the age and justice pattern, the values pattern, each with its dichotomy, the conflict fortifying the dramatic tensions. Edmund's view of nature as simply a vital force, leaving unfettered the impulses of the individual, is set over against nature as a fundamental principle of order, and in the end the play reveals Shakespeare's own judgment, "Lear's Nature conquers Edmund's." Likewise the two methods of evaluating are opposed, the rationalistic and the imaginative. Lear's error which marks his initial conduct is that of the mere calculating rationalist, and that error "becomes the whole being of Goneril and Regan." They, it is maintained, symbolize one aspect of Lear as Cordelia symbolizes the other, the imaginative insight which his experience brings to him; and the paradox is that his eyes are opened by his very irrationality. This is seen as the burden of the madness pattern, the central core of the play. In the mad scenes the other patterns are bound together, and the key phrase picked out is Edgar's "reason in madness." Therein we find expressed Shakespeare's comment on human experience: "*King Lear* dramatizes fundamentally the paradox that wisdom and insight may be found in the outcast and the deranged, and that the powerful and brilliant may be, by both moral and pragmatic standards, insane; it amplifies this dramatic theme by the contributory paradoxes that those best equipped with eyesight in the world may be blind to spiritual truths, that those who in strength and ruthlessness are like animals may have destroying weaknesses, and that the gorgeously arrayed may lose the most important of all defenses."

One has to be careful in accepting the validity of such thematic art analyses. Too often the result is the imposition of a personal fancy

or obsession, with the evidence forced or chosen with a bias to sustain it. Mr. Heilman, however, cannot be accused of presenting any esoteric interpretation. His dissection in terms of patterns does in the main correspond to the normal imaginative response to the play, and often subtly deepens our understanding of it. On the other hand, as has been suggested, he occasionally seems to lose by trying to prove too much. The language of a play like *King Lear* may assuredly be called "a close-fibered body of meanings and suggestions and effects," but the word and image relationships can be pressed too meticulously, so that the organic unity is in danger of being mechanized. In his technique of poetic analysis Mr. Heilman claims to be aligned with the most advanced contemporary critics. He certainly falls in with one very vocal school in the final message which he makes Shakespeare in *King Lear* offer the world. Like Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, too many of us belong to the "new order," self-sufficient rationalists who have sloughed off the traditional disciplinary concepts and lost the religious sense.

In his introduction to *Shakespearian Tragedy* Professor Charlton bluntly assails the neo-Shakespearians, as he calls them, the very group whose creed and methods of interpretation Mr. Heilman had praised and exemplified. The attack is all the bolder in that Mr. Charlton speaks and writes as the Clark lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge, the English home, he admits, of the offending coterie. He objects to their "new creed," the resurgence of the cult of the Middle Ages. He scoffs at their critical doctrines: "The abracadabra most potent in all these neo-Shakespearian conjurations is some such phrase as 'organic poetic structure' or the even more gnomic 'objective correlative.' These presumably can be recognized infallibly and are sufficient warrant for distorting the plain sense of the words of the text and for discarding the apparent meaning of the incidents of the scene." And Mr. Charlton makes his own position clear. He is a devout Bradleyite. Like his master he "takes Shakespeare's dramas as plays and not as poems; he accepts the persons of them at their face value as semblable men and women and not as plastic symbols in an arabesque of esoteric imagery." The remainder of the introduction considers Shakespearian tragedy in general, and, while no novelty is offered, there is a satisfying wise normality in what is said. Elizabethan tragedy, discarding the explicit religious foundation of the Greek, "had to explore other sources of the indispensable inevitability, the ultimate Necessity. The most effective one that it found was in the newly discovered wonder of human personality. . . . Character becomes the

smith of fortune if not entirely of fate." Again he counters the new school, insisting that Shakespeare's world is moral rather than metaphysical, that "humanism and humanity hold him far more passionately than theology and religion."

After two chapters on the earlier plays from *Titus Andronicus* to *Julius Caesar,* Mr. Charlton, like Bradley, centres his book on the four great tragedies. As in his earlier study of the comedies he sees and treats the tragedies as a progressive development culminating in *King Lear.* He sneeringly rejects the views of the biographical interpreters who attempt to explain the change to tragedy from "suppositititious entries in Shakespeare's spiritual laundry book." The change is wholly explicable in terms of his growing artistic powers and poetic insight. Shakespeare was striving for certain effects and in the early plays he failed. The most important of these effects was the sense of inevitability in the hero's fate. *Richard III,* he claims, lacks this. *Richard II* achieves it but the king's weakness has no momentousness. *Romeo and Juliet* relies too much on fortune and as an experiment disappointed Shakespeare. The dramatic mood in *Julius Caesar* is not primarily the tragedian's, and Brutus, with traits suggestive of the lines along which a tragic hero may be built, is yet incapable of moulding the play to a tragic pattern. This is all expounded very competently if a little tritely. Only occasionally is one roused to disagreement as when he seems to take Falconbridge's choice of "commodity" too seriously.

In his treatment of the great tragedies, Mr. Charlton does not risk any comparison with Bradley. While reiterating his belief that the greatness of the plays is finally based on their truth to life recognized in the behaviour of the characters, he attempts no such detailed analysis as Bradley had given. His main interest, as he says, is "to observe the particular manner in which the tragic action propels itself to its tragic ending, assuring itself of its own inevitability, and gathering round it the added weight of universality and momentousness." If at times the argument becomes somewhat heavy, especially in his discussion of Shakespeare's adaptations of his sources, there is much in his variation of accepted views that is refreshingly challenging. This is perhaps best seen in his diagnosis of Hamlet. Accepting the common if doubtful notion that Hamlet's tragedy is ultimately his failure to act, he sees this issuing not from a tendency to think too much but from a wrong way of thinking. Hamlet's imagination leads his speculations awry. He knows it was an honest ghost, but contents himself with plausible excuses for delay, and takes refuge in distorted

generalizations. What is often taken as his final serenity is merely a fatalist's surrender of his personal responsibility. But here there seems to be a misreading of the speech, "We defy augury. . . . If it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all." This is not, as Mr. Charlton would appear to suggest, a statement of Hamlet's abdication of his duty; he is referring to his presentiment of death. There is less substance in the chapter on *Othello*. The chief contention is that the play presents a tragic world "which is the disastrous meeting point of two cultural and spiritual conditions. . . . It becomes the tale of a frustrate human effort to link the two worlds together"; and much is made of the change in the time scheme from Cinthio's novel by which the ideal union of Othello and Desdemona "was not permitted to domesticate itself into wedlock." Occasionally Mr. Charlton is ponderously moral. *Macbeth* is discussed as it explores the operations of the human conscience "in a spiritual epoch before it had been precisely named." The meaning of the play is simple: the murderer destroys the human nature in himself. "Evil is unhuman; sin is unnaturalness rather than unrighteousness." The chapter on *King Lear* does not really lend itself to any pertinent comparison with Mr. Heilman's study. The approaches are too far apart. There is a lengthy discussion of the psychological possibility of the various versions of the division of the kingdom. Shakespeare lets go the everyday probability which marks the opening scene of the older play, and covers the unreasonableness of Lear's behaviour by the power of the poetry. He notes that the Christian setting of the Leir play gives place to a world ruled by vaguely apprehended pagan deities. For the rest the orthodox views are given fresh expression, but there is one interesting divergence from Bradley. He convincingly upholds what Bradley had doubted, the dramatic inevitability of the play's ending.

In the concluding chapter Mr. Charlton offers further generalizations. Like so much in his work they are none the worse for being often vigorous re-statements of well-worn ideas. He repeats that Shakespeare's faith is humanist, with an unconquerable trust in the nature of man. More boldly he holds that "For man, as for Shakespeare contemplating man, the true tragedy of life is a conviction of its futility." And he sums up Shakespeare's method in tragedy which he had set out to demonstrate: "He hits on a familiar and even common disease and reserves his imaginative energy for recreating each successive stage in the progress of the malady so that in the end, we, the watchers, are completely rapt with the sensible conviction of its relentless fatality and of its irreparable devastation."

The books of Professors Heilman and Charlton are ordered arguments, recognizably academic. Miss Sitwell's *William Shakespeare* is a poetess's notebook. It is an ingathering of her thoughts about the art and the meaning of the plays and of supporting quotations drawn from many sources, scholars, critics, and philosophers. It opens with "The Hymn to Life" in which she chants a paean to Shakespeare the God-like creator. Set against the sobriety of scientific criticism, this may sound extravagant or even commonplace: "He is like the sun, that common-kissing Titan, having a passion for matter, pure and impure, an energy beyond good and evil, an immense benevolence creating without choice or preference, out of the need of giving birth to life." Yet her first interest is not, in the ordinary sense, Shakespeare's art of characterization. It is rather in the inner meaning of the play, the elemental depths to which in his drama we are taken, and its hidden significances, "the sibylline utterances which abound."

Her fullest treatment is naturally of the great tragedies. Here, picking up an idea from this critic or that, she gives it a new turn of her own—the theme of Time in *Macbeth,* the relation of *Hamlet* to the Spring plays of the Fertility Ritual, coming to Shakespeare perhaps "from an ancestral memory." Her most original contributions are on *King Lear,* the contention that Shakespeare knew and used the Phaedo Dialogue, and her explanation of Edgar's words, "Nero is an angler in the lake of Darknessse." What she reads into the lines will not always convince. Here is her note on Hamlet's remarks to his father's ghost, "Well said, old Mole! Canst work i' th' earth so fast?" "May there not be depths of meaning beneath that phrase? Is not the 'earth' of which Hamlet speaks, his own too-sullied flesh, his body, the nature which governs his body, in which many things that were hidden are now thrown up by that old mole, into the light?" That certainly is burrowing too far down. Most of her other chapters consist of detached notes, and again her ideas are interwoven with pertinent extracts from her authorities. A line, a passage, or the general tenour of a play will occasionally receive its enlightening comment, as when she touches on the weighing of opposites in *Measure for Measure* or the cosmic splendour of *Antony and Cleopatra.* For the import of the last plays she relies largely on Dr. Tillyard. She accepts from him "the true meaning of *The Tempest:* Caliban, Ariel, are not only links in the chain of Being; they are also elements in the Microcosm that is Prospero." The play's secondary theme she sees as the revolution against the earthly order; and unsmilingly she brings the dramatist up to date, dreaming on things to come.

"The red plague rid you,
For learning me your language,

says Caliban to his master. Ineffable prophecy! Did some dark angel from three hundred years beyond his own death, come to visit Shakespeare?"—or to visit Miss Sitwell?

If opinions may differ as to the validity of some of the contentions jotted down in this notebook, there can be no question about one high qualification as critic which Miss Sitwell here reveals, her sensitiveness to the subtleties of Shakespeare's expression and her rare ability to analyse the movement and texture of his verse.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BACON* JOHN HERMAN RANDALL, JR.

Professor Anderson, chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, is ably carrying on the tradition of first-class work in intellectual history set for that distinguished department by the late Professor Brett. Mr. Anderson has written a comprehensive account of Bacon's philosophic thought which will be indispensable for all students of Bacon, for all serious work in seventeenth-century English literature, and for all concerned with the development of modern thinking. There is still plenty of room for specialized studies of the fascinating theme of Bacon's relation to his various predecessors, and of his influence on subsequent thinkers. Mr. Anderson's book will undoubtedly stimulate such investigation in connection with a man whose conventional reputation has obscured the real affiliations of his ideas. But the particular job of setting forth analytically just what Bacon said, within the chosen limits Mr. Anderson modestly observes, has here been accomplished so thoroughly and so competently that it will not have to be done again.

The originality of Mr. Anderson's volume in the literature of Baconian scholarship lies in the fact that he has exhaustively studied all of Bacon's thirty-odd philosophical writings. Hence he can view the man's thought as a whole, in its own terms and with its own proper emphasis. It has notoriously been the fashion either to use Bacon for some crusade of one's own, as did Diderot and D'Alembert, or to make him the foil for developing antithetical ideas, as did Morris Cohen. The professional historians of philosophy have tried, unsuccessfully, of course, to fit him into a tradition of "empiricism" culmi-

*_The Philosophy of Francis Bacon_. By FULTON H. ANDERSON. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Toronto: W. J. Gage and Company]. 1948. Pp. vii, 312. ($4.00)

nating in Hume and Mill. In reaction against this inevitable failure, others have made him a belated Aristotelian.

With no axe to grind, Mr. Anderson is in a position to offer an impartial adjudication of these stormy controversies. He tries to eschew them altogether; but those interested can discern that he has arrived at a judicious decision on most of the debated points. He knows Bacon so well that he can point out in passing that all the participants are wrong. Mr. Anderson seems not to like controversy. This will make his volume a disappointment to those eager for Baconian blood. But the informed will note that he disposes of most of the familiar disputes by calmly marshalling incontrovertible facts.

So far as my limited knowledge goes, Mr. Anderson seems to be right, I think, in all these interpretations. But his approach to Bacon has been from the side of those who came after: he has been preparing a history of British philosophy in the latter half of the seventeenth century, to which we look forward with delight. Consequently he has nothing to say about Bacon's antecedents. My only reservations would be at this point. Without in the least denying Bacon's originality, I should like to understand it. I think that all judgment as to this background ought to be postponed until the relations of his ideas to various strands of late medieval and Renaissance thought have been far more carefully explored than they have yet been. Mr. Anderson is surely right in denying that Bacon received much more than terminology from the different Aristotelian schools. But this hardly exhausts the help he received from earlier thinkers. I suspect that certain currents of Augustinian thought, and of the rhetorical tradition, had as much to do with moulding some of his ideas as the Telesio he explicitly recognizes.

Especially noteworthy, in view of the author's mastery of the field, are his conclusions as to Bacon's "influence." "In the works of some two hundred [British] authors [of the latter half of the seventeenth century] which have been brought under review no name is mentioned and no writings are quoted more often than those of Bacon." In addition to Bacon's great lawyer's indictment of the prevailing traditions, widely acclaimed by contemporaries like Descartes on the continent as well as in England ("our author set much of human knowledge on a new way by freeing science from learning and the practices and privileges of the learned"), Mr. Anderson emphasizes above all Bacon's complete emancipation of all natural knowledge from any theological conceptions, traditional or modernistic. Theology belongs to revelation: "there is nothing of God's nature and essence to be found through a study of the world."

Hence Bacon emphatically does not belong to that long line of British thinkers, from Boyle and Newton to the latest Gifford lecturer, who have managed to effect a harmony between science and theology by identifying their ultimate concepts. "There is no divine mind in nature or indeed a rational mind. Nature shows no divine efficiency in its movements or divine form in its structures. It possesses no divine causation, divine motivation, divine appetition, or any attributes of divinity. It is formed matter acting through varieties of local motion inherent within itself and nothing more. Bacon thus repudiates pantheism, theism, immanence, and transcendentalism."

In a word, Bacon is no modernist in the religious sense. He is a consistent naturalist. "It is not on any specific investigation or discovery either in natural history or physics that Bacon's importance for succeeding philosophy rests but on his thoroughgoing naturalism. . . . His philosophy professedly admits only naturalistic methods and subjects. Locke, with his 'historical, plain' treatment of knowledge, is Bacon's first outstanding descendant. . . . Naturalism became established and habilitated as a free philosophy with station, rights, and privileges." And Bacon did not think his method need stop short with natural philosophy: it embraced all the sciences, logic, ethics, and politics as well.

Mr. Anderson avoids all extreme claims for Bacon's new organon, remarking, with an eye on Cambridge: "the estimate of any philosopher of induction is rendered difficult, even precarious, by the obscurity of the whole matter with which he is presumed to deal." His appraisal is restrained and just: "certainly Bacon's own directions were seldom employed by those who professed allegiance to him. Actually these directions include all and more than all that is to be found in Mill's five canons." Bacon's striking anticipation of Mill, Mr. Anderson might have added, seems less surprising when we remember that Mill learned more about "scientific method" from reading Bacon than from any first-hand familiarity with scientific procedures.

And Mr. Anderson explains rather than apologizes for the very miscellaneous and traditional character of the various "natural histories" Bacon managed to collect, the most notorious of which is the *Sylva Sylvarum*, that compilation of old wives' tales of which Rawley reports: " I have heard his lordship often say, that if he should have served the glory of his own name, he had been better not to have published this Natural History." "Yet, a generation after Bacon's death his preliminary attempts to compile data according to his own stipulations arouse others to succeed where he fails. . . .

Bacon becomes their prophet, and his works the symbol of a new science. The 'Catalogue of Particular Histories' attached to the *Parasceve* furnishes subjects for inquiry by members of the Royal Society and others who investigate the constitution of things from minerals to human faculties by means of a 'historical' method. Sprat, in his official *History of the Royal Society,* is able to say that in the works of Bacon 'are everywhere scattered, the best Arguments that can be produc'd for the defence of experimental Philosophy; and the best Directions that are needful to promote it.' " A less sympathetic historian than Mr. Anderson might have added that Bacon must bear part of the responsibility for the rather aimless fooling around with things that consumed the time of most of the members of the Royal Society.

Mr. Anderson finally and definitively disposes of those who would put Bacon in the noble, if dubious, tradition of British empiricism. "Mill is concerned with predicting repetition of contiguous phenomena in recurring situations, while Bacon seeks the elements which constitute the system of nature, governed by settled law and moved by identical causes. Mill is an empiricist for whom the universal is but a product of mental association. Bacon is a rationalist and a realist for whom particulars are constituted of universal natures and for whom the science by which they are known is the rational cognition of natures as they really are."

But Mr. Anderson's major concern is to give a careful and detailed exposition in Bacon's own language of his mechanical, experimental, and materialistic naturalism. He follows the scheme of the Great Instauration of learning, but traces the ideas as they appear in that final formulation from their earliest beginnings in Bacon's writings. This enables him to clarify with great lucidity the more difficult of Bacon's conceptions, such as the distinction between certainty and liberty in direction, and the vexed question of the precise meaning of "form" as it functions in various contexts.

Indeed, so fascinated is Mr. Anderson by the architectonic structure of Bacon's thought that he puts little emphasis on what is most distinctive about it, the prophetic vision of what applied science was to mean for the relief of man's estate. For Bacon after all was essentially a humanist, concerned with the chief good of man. He belongs to that minority among the humanists who found that good in fruitful works and operations. And his ideal, which was to become the dominant goal of modern times, is the aim of Solomon's House in

the *New Atlantis:* "to extend the bounds of human empire over nature, to the effecting of all things possible." But we can rejoice that Mr. Anderson, instead of reiterating this familiar theme, leads us onto less trodden ground.

Nor does Mr. Anderson discuss the ethics of the power which knowledge brings. He does not, in the current fashion, indulge in moralizing over the right use of that power, or over the question of whether some things possible might better not be effected. His book is not about our present discontents, but about what Bacon said and thought. On the possible perversions of the power conferred by technology, he is content to allow Bacon to speak for himself. "Now while it is true that the arts and sciences may be debased 'to wickedness, luxury, and the like,' the same may be said 'of all earthly goods, of wit, courage, strength, beauty, wealth, light itself and the rest.' And there is this sound principle through whose application knowledge in use, like other goods, may be kept from working evil: Let knowledge be 'governed by right reason and sound religion.' "

For all his prophetic power, Bacon may not have felt this problem so keenly as the least of us do today. But despite our feverish concern, on the method of dealing with it, has any of us managed to say much more?

LITERARY IMITATION IN THE RENAISSANCE* H. S. WILSON

This excellent study does for students of Milton what Professor T. W. Baldwin did for students of Shakespeare in *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke* (1944)—that is, it traces the curriculum of studies Milton followed as a schoolboy, analyses and explains the textbooks he used and the school exercises he performed, and offers many valuable suggestions for relating this programme of studies to the criticism of Milton's works. Between them, Professor Baldwin and Professor Clark have provided an invaluable basis for our understanding of how English schoolboys in the Renaissance learned to write. Of the two studies, Professor Baldwin's is the more encyclopaedic, Professor Clark's the simpler and more concise. Those who have been dismayed by the massive volumes of Professor Baldwin will find the heart of the matter lucidly set forth in the two chapters, "Authors for Imitation" (chap. 7) and "Exercises for

**John Milton at St. Paul's School: A Study of Ancient Rhetoric in English Renaissance Education.* By DONALD LEMEN CLARK. New York: Columbia University Press [Toronto: Oxford University Press]. 1948. Pp. xi, 269. ($4.50)

Praxis" (chap. 8), of Professor Clark's more compendious book. These two chapters might well become required reading for all serious students of the literature of the English Renaissance.

Professor Clark begins his study with an outline of the tradition of the Trivium (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic) which the Renaissance inherited from the schools of the Middle Ages as the fundamental programme of all school studies. He then reviews what is known of the famous school John Milton attended, St. Paul's, and of Milton's schoolmasters, especially the two who seem to have had most to do with the young Milton, Alexander Gil and his son Alexander. There follows a survey of the course of studies pursued at St. Paul's in Milton's day and the textbooks prescribed; and then, the two chapters, above referred to, which contain the essential matter of the book and to which the earlier chapters are really introductory.

The author appropriately divides these two chapters according to the Ramist dichotomy of "Analysis" and "Genesis," since Milton was himself a good Ramist and followed, in the main, a Ramist method in his own studies. According to the Ramist *Method,* "Analysis" consists in resolving the examples of an art into their principles and relating the parts so analysed to their appropriate precepts. Thus, in chapter 7, we learn how Milton was taught to choose the right authors as literary models and to study in the classroom their methods of writing through exercises in memory, translation, and paraphrase. In chapter 8, we follow the complementary exercises of "Genesis," according to which the schoolboy was first to imitate his models in some work of his own and then "to make somewhat alone without an example." As Professor Clark explains, the schoolboy letters, themes, and verses which formed the staple of this *praxis* never in fact escaped some degree of imitation of the admired examples of Cicero, Virgil, and the other classical models; nor were they meant to.

It is equally mistaken to condemn Renaissance authors for servile imitation or to commend them for a supposed "originality." They did not think about the literary art in this way. They supposed that there was a broad uniformity in the principles of literary art, as there was in the use of reason, in truth, and in faith, that the effort of the writer should be to conform his method of writing to the known principles of good writing as exemplified by the best authors, as he conformed his thinking to the principles of the greatest philosophers and his faith to the authority of the Bible or the teaching of the Church. Though they sometimes charged each other with lack of initiative and other sorts of indolence or stupidity, for purposes of

controversy, Renaissance writers were not really concerned about the charge of servilely copying Cicero or Homer or Virgil any more than they were about the charge of too scrupulously "imitating" Plato or Aristotle. The greatest art of imitation for the Christian Renaissance was the "Imitatio Christi"; and they thought about "imitation" in other spheres in somewhat the same way. The trouble was that one could not, no matter how hard one tried, make one's imitation close enough to the great model. The goddess Mutability, whom Spenser represented as claiming sovereignty over all things in Nature's domain, effectively prevented any real uniformity or permanence in man's temporal experience. And yet there was a principle of order and continuity which "imitation" helped to preserve:

> I well consider all that ye have sayd;
> And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
> And changed be; yet, being rightly wayd,
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate;
> And, turning to themselves at length againe,
> Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:
> Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne,
> But they raigne over Change, and doe their states maintaine.

Thus tradition, in the sphere of literary art, as elsewhere, was thought of as a vital and developing principle of order which maintained its norms through imitation. There was always variety and individuality in this process: that was in the nature of things and especially of man's imperfection. There was always room for improvement, for a closer approximation to the ideal. Thus Cardinal Bembo, with his great cult for Cicero, nevertheless urged writers to try to rival and even improve upon their model; Spenser proposed to "overgo" Ariosto; and Milton chose a theme for his epic calculated to surpass even the ancients. But the great tradition of Homer and Virgil, Cicero and Demosthenes, Plautus and Terence and Seneca, nevertheless remained normative and vital in the literary art of the Renaissance, as did the thought of Plato and Aristotle, and, in a more absolute fashion, the teachings of the Bible. This is why the principle of imitation is fundamental in Renaissance culture.

Professor Clark has shown how this principle of imitation was taught to the young John Milton, as it was to every other Renaissance schoolboy, how he practised it, and how it became a vital part of his literary art. Not only for students of Milton but for all those who study Renaissance authors, such a clue to the understanding of what they wrote is indispensable.

MATTHEW ARNOLD*

CARLETON STANLEY

This is a scholar's book, and avowedly written for scholars. Furthermore, as the title indicates, the author limits himself to a special field, and says in his preface: "It is not the whole of Arnold's personality that I have tried to render. There are perhaps too many books that concern themselves with Arnold as a whole." Here we have a scholar's modesty. Within the field he has chosen Professor Brown has been admirably successful. He modestly acknowledges his indebtedness to Professor Trilling's *Matthew Arnold* "for its discernment and scholarly fulness in almost everything that relates to Arnold's thought." Now, Professor Trilling's book is indeed praiseworthy, but it may be that it contains a danger which Professor Brown quite avoids. Though he does not himself ride the word to death, Trilling several times uses the word "ambivalence" about Arnold's mind. This is a word which Dr. Jung made fashionable in certain quarters. Trilling knows too much of Arnold, is too appreciative of his work, to push the psychological theory to its limit: if that were done it ought to mean that Arnold accomplished nothing. But the danger is, for sciolists at least, of whom there are always many, that Trilling may be thought to have explained the complexity of Arnold's mind by giving it a label. Professor Brown, on the other hand, from first to last makes us feel how baffling that complexity is.

Yet the phrase "baffling complexity" must not be misunderstood. Matthew Arnold's father was an exceedingly complicated character. Sir Michael Sadler wrote brilliantly about this in his introduction to *Dr. Arnold of Rugby* by the doctor's great-grandson, Arnold Whitridge, a very learned and judicious writer. Now, at the end Whitridge says: "There has never been, nor is there ever likely to be, any difference of opinion about [Dr.] Arnold's character. *He offers no problem to the psychologist.*" (The italics are mine.) This, if the words be weighed and taken in their context, is well said, and Sadler who disagrees with two points in Whitridge does not disagree with these statements. Yet it is to be observed that the immediate occasion of the book was Lytton Strachey's "caricature," which Whitridge does not resent. Further it is with the utmost patience that he sets himself to correct, as one-sided, other opinions about his ancestor, and admits that there was a "legend" about him. "It is no easy task to take the measure" of Dr. Arnold, he says, and to get the proper perspective; yet he thinks it can be done. He admits that in some of the many

**Matthew Arnold: A Study in Conflict.* By E. K. BROWN. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Toronto: Ryerson]. 1948. Pp. xiv, 224. ($3.50)

things he attempted Dr. Arnold failed, but argues, on the evidence he adduces, that some of his achievements were "supremely valuable."

Not only was Matthew Arnold the son of this complex character (who wrote so frequently from Switzerland about the joy and peace of living in the Alps even while he remained over-anxious about things at home, who was something of a John Bull but was suspect as being too fond of the French, who had the kindest of hearts but thoroughly believed in caning boys, who was tolerant to a degree but capable of furious angry vehemence), not only so, but some of the writers who most influenced the son were characters marked by cleavage. Every writer about Arnold quotes what he said of Sophocles attaining serenity, but Arnold from his youth on was pondering Lucretius, who praises the serenity of his master Epicurus, but himself makes us feel so poignantly the wrenching struggle and incurable sadness of life. How deep are the cleavages in Lucretius! Mrs. Sells has written fascinatingly and with knowledge of the attraction of Senancour (another divided soul) for Arnold, but most of the passages in Senancour which she quotes, to trace their influence on Arnold, are as Lucretian as can be. Referring to *Resignation* as an "epitome" of Senancour, she says: "This is the *sérénité*" of the French author. But *serenus* is a favourite word with Lucretius.

Is there anything highly unusual about inner conflict in man? And if the man be an artist do his inner conflicts *necessarily* militate against his art? Professor Brown twice mentions Housman in comparison with Arnold—a comparison worth making, both as he makes it and in other ways. For example, it is just as hard to make a "unity" of fastidiousness and delicacy along with a capacity for heavy invective in one man as in the other. Professor Brown shows what anyone would admit, that in places conflicting moods do militate against Arnold's art, both in verse and in prose. But does discord in mood *necessarily* stand in the way of art? To take an example from Housman: is not

> Tell me not here, it needs not saying,
> What tunes the enchantress plays—

a wonderfully perfect lyric? But is it not, at one and the same time, a protest against, and a partial succumbing to "the pathetic fallacy"? I firmly believe that Professor Brown would admit my point, not only for literature but for music and other arts. Still I find myself wishing that he had not begun by quoting, without any adverse comment, what a writer named Roscoe said of Arnold's poetry in 1858: that he

had "everywhere shown that he is deficient in the higher power of conception which requires unity." There is a disunity in *Tristram and Iseult,* with which our author shows Roscoe was particularly dealing, which is inartistic, and there are admittedly inartistic disunities in others of his works. But as the quotation stands, Roscoe is saying that as a poet Arnold "everywhere" fails. Professor Brown does not believe this: he speaks of *The Forsaken Merman* as "triumphant artistry." I am certain too that Professor Brown understands very well that Arnold sometimes achieves art out of his own discordant moods. *The Last Word,* not nearly so great a performance as *The Forsaken Merman,* is still a poem.

I have said so much of this through an anxiety (which may be unreasonable) lest the title of the book, and the putting on the first page of it of this bald quotation from Roscoe, may mislead some of Professor Brown's readers about matters of fundamental importance. I should not take these pains did I not so much admire his book. Only one statement in it is a bogle to me: "Everyone knows that he [Arnold as a poet] lacks a distinctive manner of his own, differing in this from Tennyson and Browning, Swinburne and Rossetti, Hardy and Housman." Let me say merely that this is at least open to argument. Being derivative has nothing to do with the matter: Housman is endlessly derivative, not merely from ancient but from modern sources.

Why do I so much admire this book? It certainly does not conform to advice of mine, that to understand any part of Arnold one must take him as a whole and in relation to his age, difficult as that might be. Also I wanted it understood that certain features in his own character and conduct, such as his Pindaric aloofness, had greatly contributed to his being neglected, distrusted, and disliked even by critics of learning and acumen, English and American, though a correct appraisal might be salutary for us Americans. The Arnolds, John Bullish and Francophile as they were, divined that the future of West Europe might lie with European lands outside Europe. Dr. Arnold bought two hundred acres of land in New Zealand, and had thoughts of moving there; one of his sons went to Australia and kept the family informed on tendencies there; Matt's beloved daughter Lucy married an American; and one of his circle migrated to Cornell University, and spent his "retirement" in Toronto.

Now, I do not think that anyone else has, in the brief compass of Professor Brown's book, massed such an accumulation of evidence for the fact that Matthew Arnold heedlessly provoked and made

hostile so many who should have understood, sympathized with, and admired him. Philip Grove used to say that Arnold ought to have been one of his idols, but that he could never read a line of him with patience after he discovered his remark on Lincoln. DeQuincey complained that Dr. Arnold burst into a pamphlet the moment he feared a revolution in English affairs, and that such fears were needless. The indubitable fact was, as H. A. L. Fisher and Elie Halévy have shown, that in Dr. Arnold's time and later a *culbute* in English affairs was narrowly, some would say miraculously, averted. Matthew Arnold was at times acutely aware that the crisis went far beyond his own country and his own generation. Professor Brown has shown that when these moments were on him he forgot or disregarded the very principles he most deeply cherished. In another age something of the kind happened to the greatest of all philosophers. But to say that is not to excuse Arnold, nor to minimize the importance of understanding the lamentable fact. And Professor Brown, who seems to be as free as the wind in blowing where he listeth, continues to spend a large part of his admirable energy in elucidating the significance of Matthew Arnold with all his glories, as Burke would have put it, and all his imperfections on his head.

It is possible that Professor Brown is a better critic of Arnold's prose than of his poetry, at least in these two hundred pages. He has a rare skill in analysing the various prose styles which Arnold used, and great insight into the relative merits of the essays and their criticism. It was a misfortune for his age that the inner purpose and import of the Celtic essays were missed. It is a misfortune, not merely for Arnold's reputation but for our time, that the value of *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* should be so generally overlooked, and that so much emphasis should be laid on *Culture and Anarchy*. In these matters and others Professor Brown adjusts the balance. He has distilled much wisdom into the notes at the end of his book, which deserve the closest reading.

COMPLETED MEMOIR*

W. ROBBINS

Biographies and studies of the major Victorians would seem to justify the pendulum metaphor. The awed, or cautious, respect of the *nil nisi bonum* obituary phase eventually gave way to irreverent irony and the thumbed nose, a revolt which has been followed by attempts at

**Alfred Tennyson*. By his grandson CHARLES TENNYSON. New York: Macmillan Company [Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada]. 1949. Pp. 579. ($9.00)

just appreciation and sane estimate. These divisions are of course not exclusive, and in this latest biography of Tennyson, by his grandson, there is, naturally and understandably, a nostalgically Victorian flavour in phrase and attitude.

The most impressive critical as well as biographical study so far produced on any Victorian poet is that on Matthew Arnold by Lionel Trilling. But then Arnold, critic and essayist as well as poet, demands a comparative and analytical treatment of sources and ideas, and Professor Trilling has met the challenge with striking success in a book that is as much the biography of an age as of a man. An equally comprehensive and judicious view has yet to be taken of Browning or Tennyson. Meanwhile there is need for the complete and detailed record of the poet's life, exhausting all available primary sources, and in that important sense the present biography of Tennyson may well be regarded as definitive.

Essentially, Sir Charles' book is the amplifying and completing of the fifty-year-old memoir by Hallam Tennyson. The order is strictly chronological; the biographical fullness is extended to all the poet's relations and connections; there are a dozen excellent reproductions of photographs and paintings and a most satisfactory index. (Perhaps the reproductions explain the list price, which this reviewer finds staggering.)

The fullness of detail in treating of the antecedents and early years of Tennyson is especially welcome, after such romantic speculations as Nicolson's that "the black and bitter strain of some obscurer ancestry" mingled with yeoman stock. Here the d'Eyncourt and Tennyson lines are briefly traced, and one simply observes the working out in the poet's family of an obvious, and admitted, constitutional tendency to depression and irritability. The feud between Tennyson's father, the displaced elder son, and his grandfather; the spectacle of favoured and successful relatives spending lavishly on the restoration and upkeep of a castle while the parson's large brood struggled along at Somersby Rectory; the increasing violence and intemperance of the father and corresponding misery of the mother: all this hectic and sometimes sordid background is frankly and fully searched, with the result that the reader comes to regard as inevitable the poet's fits of melancholy and bitter moods, aggravated as they were by the gradually developing psychosis of three of his brothers and the drug habit of a fourth. Equally inevitable, against such a background, is the powerful drive for financial security, and the idealizing of domestic happiness and stability.

If on the one hand this biographical fullness serves to account for the strains of pessimism in Tennyson's work, even without the crowning disaster of Hallam's death, on the other hand it brings out more clearly than ever before how much Tennyson owed to the unqualified belief of his friends, and his publisher Moxon, in his genius. The attitude of men like Douglas Jerrold, Monckton Milnes, and FitzGerald is at times little short of idolatry, and Sir Charles shows that this "Victorian capacity for hero-worship" was still flourishing when Tennyson met young Edmund Gosse in 1871. Certainly its effects can be seen in Tennyson's desire in 1848 to visit the Cornish coast and "be alone with God," and in Emerson's verdict of the same year that "Tennyson had the manner of one accustomed to be indulged and petted by those with whom he lived." No English poet has had his royal prerogatives asserted and his sensitive ego protected, pending public acclaim, by so loyal a body of courtiers, a homage at least partly responsible for the bardic and oracular strain. It is true that Carlyle and FitzGerald lost their enthusiasm for his poetry, but it is naïve of Sir Charles to suggest that Tennyson's continued intimacy with *them* frees him of any responsibility for the break with Patmore, who "considerably abated his former enthusiasm for Tennyson's poetry and intellect." Carlyle saw in the *Idylls* evidence of the futility of poetry in general, and FitzGerald found nothing in Tennyson's later work to match the "champagne flavour" of the 1842 poems, but neither friend ceased paying tribute to the intellect of the Great Man.

Though Sir Charles points to sentimentality in the poet, and makes occasional fruitful suggestions, for example that the model for the hero of *Maud* and the two Locksley Hall poems was Frederick Tennyson, his attitude on the whole will strike most readers as uncritical, and even itself Victorian. He makes no comment on Tennyson's amazement that Keats, a stableman's son, should have had that "divine gift" (not that any comment is needed); he evokes no irony from Gilbert's statement that, given *The Promise of May* for a fortnight, he would make a success of it; he makes no play with incidents rich in unfortunate symbolism, as when Lizzie Siddall dated her devotion to Tennyson from her first reading of a poem on a printed sheet wrapped around a pound of butter, or when the poet himself, rushing eagerly out of doors at Bude to view the mighty ocean, fell six feet over a sea wall and injured a leg.

But this refusal to come between the reader and Tennyson is the writer's strength. To Nicolson, the essential Tennyson is "an

unhappy mystic" who is "forced by circumstances into fifty years of unnatural objectivity." Now in reading the excellent studies by Nicolson or Fausset, one may accept such generalizations, or approve the thesis or interpretation, but one is always aware that he is confronted with a thesis or an interpretation. In this latest biography, sympathetic in tone as it is, the light is steadily focused on Alfred Tennyson, and the reader is free to come to his own conclusions about the man and the poet, surely a prime virtue in biographical writing. Sir Charles' own summary of Tennyson's powers and reputation, in the concluding chapters and the epilogue, is a balanced and sensible one. The reader may not accept the implied prophecy or the quoted judgment, when Sir Charles gives us the opinion of "an acute young critic of the generation which is leading the return to Tennyson" that Tennyson will always be in the first rank because he is "the most human of the great poets." But he will have a greatly increased understanding of Tennyson himself as a human being, and for that increased understanding he will be indebted to the research and candour of the poet's grandson.

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